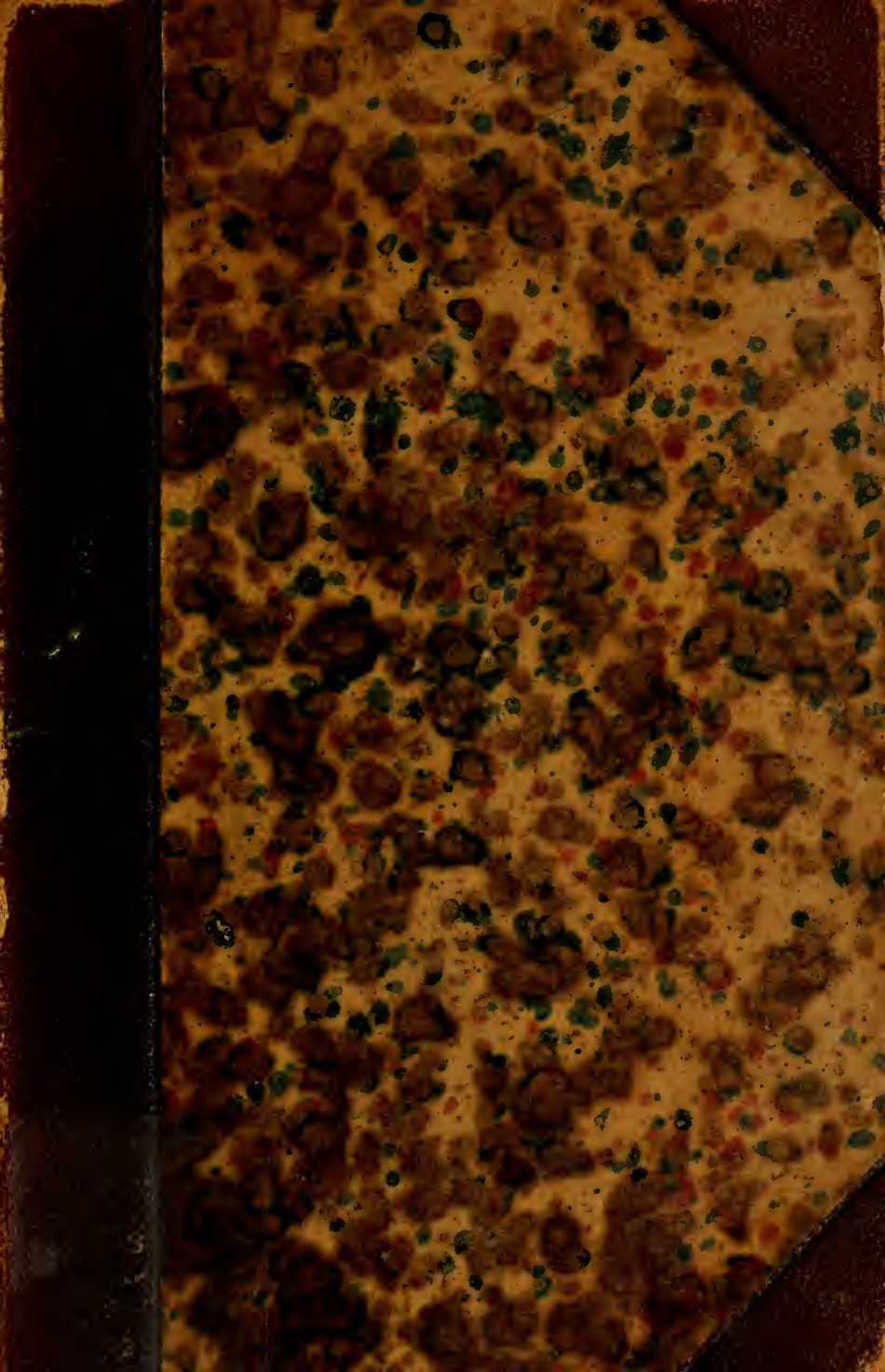

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A DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES:

CONTAINING

An Examination of the Principles advanced by DAVID HUME, Esq;

In an ESSAY on MIRACLES.

By GEORGE CAMPBELL, D. D.
Principal of the Mariſchal College, and one of the Miniſters, of ABERDEEN.

The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witneſs of me. JOHN X. 25.

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,

JOHN EARL OF BUTE,

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY's PRINCIPAL SECRETARIES OF STATE,

CHANCELLOR OF THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN,

THE FOLLOWING DISSERTATION,

IN DEFENCE OF A RELIGION, OF WHICH HE IS AN EMINENT PATRON AND EXAMPLE,

IS,

WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT AND GRATITUDE,

INSCRIB'D BY

HIS LORDSHIP's
MOST DUTIFUL,
MOST DEVOTED, AND
MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

GEORGE CAMPBELL.

ADVERTISEMENT.

'TIS not the only, nor even the chief, design of these sheets, to refute the reasoning and objections of Mr Hume, with regard to miracles: the chief design of them is, to set the principal argument for Christianity in its proper light. On a subject that hath been so often treated, 'tis impossible to avoid saying many things which have been said before. It may, however, with reason be affirmed, that there still remains, on this subject, great scope for new observations. Besides, it ought to be remember'd, that the evidence of any complex argument depends very much on the order into which the material circumstances are digested, and the manner in which they are display'd.

The *Essay on Miracles* deserves to be consider'd, as one of the most dangerous at-

tacks that have been made on our religion. The danger reſults not ſolely from the merit of THE PIECE; it reſults much more from that of THE AUTHOR. *The piece* itſelf, like every other work of Mr Hume, is ingenious; but its merit is more of the oratorial kind than of the philoſophical. The merit of *the author*, I acknowledge, is great. The many uſeful volumes he hath publiſhed of *hiſtory*, and on *criticiſm*, *politics*, and *trade*, have juſtly procur'd him, with all perſons of taſte and diſcernment, the higheſt reputation as a writer. What pity is it, that this reputation ſhould have been ſullied by attempts to undermine the foundations both of *natural religion*, and of *reveal'd!*

For my own part, I think it a piece of juſtice in me, to acknowledge the obligations I owe the author, before I enter on the propos'd examination. I have not only been much entertain'd and inſtructed by

by his works; but, if I am poſſeſs'd of any talent in abſtract reaſoning, I am not a little indebted to what he hath written on *human nature*, for the improvement of that talent. If therefore, in this tract, I have refuted Mr Hume's *Eſſay*, the greater ſhare of the merit is perhaps to be aſcrib'd to Mr Hume himſelf. The compliment which the Ruſſian monarch, after the famous battle of Poltowa, paid the Swediſh generals, when he gave them the honourable appellation of his *maſters in the art of war*, I may, with great ſincerity, pay my acute and ingenious adverſary.

I ſhall add a few things concerning the occaſion and form of the following diſſertation.

Some of the principal topics here diſcuſs'd, were more briefly treated in a *ſermon* preached before the *ſynod* of ABERDEEN, and are now made public at their deſire. To the end that an argument of ſo great

importance might be more fully and freely canvaſs'd than it could have been, with propriety, in a ſermon, it was judg'd neceſſary to new-model the diſcourſe, and to give it that form in which it now appears.

The *edition* of Mr Hume's eſſays to which I always refer in this work, is that printed at LONDON, in duodecimo, 1750, intitled, *Philoſophical eſſays concerning human underſtanding*. I have, ſince finiſhing this tract, ſeen a later *edition*, in which there are a few *variations*. None of them appear'd to me ſo material, as to give ground for altering the *quotations* and *references* here us'd. There is indeed one *alteration*, which candour requir'd that I ſhould mention: I have accordingly mention'd it in a note *.

The *arguments* of the eſſayiſt I have endeavour'd to refute by *argument*. Mere *declamation* I know no way of refuting,

* page 314.

but

but by *analyſing* it; nor do I conceive how *inconſiſtencies* can be anſwer'd otherwiſe than by *expoſing* them. In ſuch *analyſis* and *expoſition*, which, I own, I have attempted without ceremony or reſerve, an air of *ridicule* is unavoidable: but this *ridicule*, I am well aware, if founded in *miſrepreſentation*, will at laſt rebound upon *myſelf*. It is poſſible, that, in ſome things, I have *miſtaken* the author's meaning; I am conſcious, that I have not, in any thing, deſignedly *miſrepreſented* it.

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A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

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INTRODUCTION.

"CHRISTIANITY," it hath been ſaid, "is not founded in argument." If it were only meant by theſe words, that the religion of Jeſus could not, by the ſingle aid of reaſoning, produce its full effect upon the heart; every true Chriſtian would chearfully ſubſcribe to them. No arguments unaccompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit, can convert the ſoul from ſin to God; though even to ſuch converſion, arguments are, by the agency of the Spirit, render'd ſubſervient. Again, if we were to underſtand by this aphoriſm, that the principles of our religion could never have been diſcover'd, by the natural and unaſſiſted faculties of man; this poſition, I preſume, would be as little diſputed as the former. But if, on the contrary, under the cover of an ambiguous expreſſion, it is

intended to insinuate, that those principles, from their very nature, can admit no rational evidence of their truth, (and this, by the way, is the only meaning which can avail our antagonists) the gospel, as well as common sense, loudly reclaims against it.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST, the author of our religion, often argu'd, both with his disciples and with his adversaries, as with reasonable men, on the principles of reason. Without this faculty, he well knew, they could not be susceptible either of religion or of law. He argu'd from prophecy, and the conformity of the event to the prediction *. He argu'd from the testimony of John the Baptist, who was generally acknowledged to be a prophet †. He argu'd from the miracles which he himself perform'd ‡, as uncontrovertible evidences, that GOD Almighty operated

* Luke xxiv. 25. &c. John v. 39. & 46. † John v. 32. & 33.
‡ John v. 36. x. 25. 37. 38. xiv. 10. 11.

by

by him, and had sent him. He expostulates with his enemies, that they did not use their reason on this subject. *Why*, says he, *even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right*?* In like manner we are called upon by the apostles of our Lord, to act the part of *wise men*, and *judge* impartially of *what* they *say* †. Those who do so, are highly commended, for the candour and prudence they discover, in an affair of so great consequence ‡. We are even commanded, to be *always ready to give an answer to every man, that asketh* us *a reason of* our *hope* ‖; *in meekness* to *instruct them that oppose themselves* **; and *earnestly* to *contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints* ††. God has neither in natural nor reveal'd religion, *left himself without a witness*; but has in both given moral and external evidence, sufficient to convince

* Luke xii. 57. † 1 Cor. x. 15. ‡ Acts xvii. 11.
‖ 1 Peter iii. 15. ** 2 Tim. ii. 25. †† Jude 3.

the impartial, to ſilence the gainſayer, and to render the atheiſt and the unbeliever without excuſe. This evidence it is our duty to attend to, and candidly to examine. We muſt *prove all things*, as we are expreſsly enjoin'd in holy writ, if we would ever hope to *hold faſt that which is good* *.

THUS much I thought proper to premiſe, not to ſerve as an apology for the deſign of this tract, (the deſign ſurely needs no apology, whatever the world may judge of the execution) but to expoſe the ſhallowneſs of that pretext, under which the advocates for infidelity in this age commonly take ſhelter. Whilſt therefore we enforce an argument, which, in ſupport of our religion, was ſo frequently inſiſted on by its divine founder, we will not dread the reproachful titles of *dangerous friends*, or *diſguiſed enemies* of revelation. Such are the titles, which the writer, whoſe ſen-

* 1 Theſſ. v. 21.

timents

timents we propoſe in theſe papers to canvaſs, hath beſtow'd on his antagoniſts *; not, I believe, through malice againſt them, but as a ſort of excuſe for himſelf, or at leaſt a handle for introducing a very ſtrange and unmeaning compliment to the religion of his country, after a very bold attempt to undermine it. We will however do him the juſtice to own, that he hath put it out of our power to retort the charge. No intelligent perſon, who hath carefully peruſed the *Eſſay on Miracles*, will impute to the author either of thoſe ignominious characters.

My *primary* intention in undertaking an anſwer to the aforeſaid eſſay, hath invariably been, to contribute all in my power, to the defence of a *religion*, which I eſteem the greateſt bleſſing conferred by Heaven on the ſons of men. It is at the ſame time a *ſecondary* motive of conſiderable weight, to vindicate *philoſophy*, at leaſt that moſt im-

* p. 204.

portant

portant branch of it which aſcertains the rules of reaſoning, from thoſe abſurd conſequences, as I imagine, which this author's theory naturally leads us to. The theme is arduous. The adverſary is both ſubtle and powerful. With ſuch an adverſary, I ſhould on very unequal terms enter the liſts, had I not the advantage of being on the ſide of truth. And an eminent advantage this doubtleſs is. It requires but moderate abilities to ſpeak in defence of a good cauſe. A good cauſe demands but a diſtinct expoſition and a fair hearing; and we may ſay with great propriety, it will ſpeak for itſelf. But to adorn error with the ſemblance of truth, and *make the worſe appear the better reaſon*, requires all the arts of ingenuity and invention; arts in which few or none have been more expert than Mr Hume. It is much to be regretted, that on ſome occaſions he hath ſo ill applied them.

A DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES.

PART I.

Miracles are capable of proof from teſtimony, and religious miracles are not leſs capable of this evidence than others.

SECTION I.

Mr Hume's favourite argument is founded on a falſe hypotheſis.

IT is not the aim of this author to evince, that miracles, if admitted to be true, would not be a ſufficient evidence of a divine miſſion. His deſign is

is ſolely to prove, that miracles which have not been the objects of our own ſenſes, at leaſt ſuch as are ſaid to have been perform'd in atteſtation of any religious ſyſtem, cannot reaſonably be admitted by us, or believ'd on the teſtimony of others. "A miracle," ſays he, "ſupported by a-"ny human teſtimony, is more properly "a ſubject of deriſion than of argument *." Again, in the concluſion of his eſſay, "Up-"on the whole, it appears, that no teſtimo-"ny for *any kind* of miracle, can ever poſ-"ſibly amount to a probability, much "leſs to a proof †." Here he concludes againſt all miracles. "*Any kind* of mi-"racle" are his expreſs words. He ſeems however immediately ſenſible, that in aſſerting this, he hath gone too far; and therefore, in the end of the ſame paragraph, retracts part of what he had advanc'd in the beginning: "We may e-

* p. 194. † p. 202.

"ſtabliſh

" ſtabliſh it as a maxim, that no human " teſtimony can have ſuch force, as to " prove a miracle, and make it a juſt foun- "-dation for any ſyſtem of religion." In the note on this paſſage, he has theſe words. " I beg the limitation here made, " may be remarked, when I ſay that a " miracle can never be prov'd, ſo as to be " the foundation of a ſyſtem of religion. " For I own that otherwiſe there may " poſſibly be miracles, or violations of the " uſual courſe of nature, of ſuch a kind, " as to admit of proof from human teſti- " mony."

So much for that cardinal point, which the eſſayiſt labours ſo ſtrenuouſly to evince; and which, if true, will not only be ſubverſive of revelation, as receiv'd by us, on the teſtimony of the apoſtles, and prophets, and martyrs; but will directly lead to this general concluſion: ' That ' it is impoſſible for God Almighty to

'give a revelation, attended with ſuch e-
'vidence, that it can be reaſonably be-
'liev'd in after-ages, or even in the ſame
'age, by any perſon who hath not been
'an eye-witneſs of the miracles, by which
'it is ſupported.'

Now by what wonderful proceſs of rea-ſoning is this ſtrange concluſion made out? Several topics have been employ'd for the purpoſe by this ſubtle diſputant. Among theſe there is one principal argument, which he is at great pains to ſet off, to the beſt advantage. Here indeed he claims a fatherly concern, having diſcover'd it himſelf. His title to the honour of the diſcovery, 'tis not my buſineſs to controvert; I confine myſelf entirely to the conſideration of its importance. To this end I ſhall now lay before the reader, the unanſwerable argument, as he flatters himſelf it will be found; taking the freedom, for brevity's

brevity's ſake, to compendize the reaſoning, and to omit whatever is ſaid merely for illuſtration. To do otherwiſe would lay us under the neceſſity of tranſcribing the greater part of the eſſay.

'Experience,' ſays he, 'is our only 'guide in reaſoning concerning matters 'of fact *. Experience is in ſome things 'variable, in ſome things uniform. A 'variable experience gives riſe only to pro- 'bability; an uniform experience a- 'mounts to a proof †. Probability al- 'ways ſuppoſes an oppoſition of experi- 'ments and obſervations, where the one 'ſide is found to overbalance the other, 'and to produce a degree of evidence 'proportion'd to the ſuperiority. In ſuch 'caſes we muſt balance the oppoſite ex- 'periments, and deduct the leſſer num- 'ber from the greater, in order to 'know the exact force of the ſuperior

* p. 174. † p. 175. 176.

'evidence *. Our belief or assurance of 'any fact from the report of eye-witnesses, 'is deriv'd from no other principle than 'experience; that is, our observation of 'the veracity of human testimony, and 'of the usual conformity of facts to the 'reports of witnesses †. Now if the fact 'attested partakes of the marvellous, if it 'is such as has seldom fallen under our 'observation, here is a contest of two op-'posite experiences, of which the one de-'stroys the other, as far as its force goes, 'and the superior can only operate on the 'mind by the force which remains. The 'very same principle of experience, which 'gives us a certain degree of assurance, 'in the testimony of witnesses, gives us 'also, in this case, another degree of assu-'rance, against the fact which they en-'deavour to establish; from which con-'tradiction, there necessarily arises a

* p. 176. † ib.

'counterpoise,

'counterpoiſe, and mutual deſtruction of 'belief and authority *. Further, if the 'fact affirmed by the witneſſes, inſtead 'of being only marvellous, is really mi-'raculous; if beſides, the teſtimony con-'ſider'd apart and in itſelf, amounts to 'an entire proof; in that caſe there is 'proof againſt proof, of which the ſtrong-'eſt muſt prevail, but ſtill with a dimi-'nution of its force, in proportion to 'that of its antagoniſt. A miracle is a 'violation of the laws of nature; and as 'a firm and unalterable experience has e-'ſtabliſhed theſe laws, the proof againſt 'a miracle from the very nature of the 'fact, is as entire, as any argument from 'experience can poſſibly be imagined †. 'And if ſo, 'tis an undeniable conſe-'quence, that it cannot be ſurmounted 'by any proof whatever from teſtimony. 'A miracle therefore, however atteſted,

* p. 179. † p. 180.

'can

'can never be render'd credible, even in 'the loweſt degree.' This, in my apprehenſion, is the ſum of the argument, on which our ingenious opponent reſts the ſtrength of his cauſe.

IN anſwer to this I propoſe firſt to prove that the whole is built upon a falſe hypotheſis. That the evidence of teſtimony is derived ſolely from experience, which ſeems to be an axiom of this writer, is at leaſt not ſo inconteſtable a truth, as he ſuppoſes it; that, on the contrary, teſtimony hath a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience, will, I imagine, eaſily be evinced. For this purpoſe let it be remark'd,—that the earlieſt aſſent, which is given to teſtimony by children, and which is previous to all experience, is in fact the moſt unlimited; that by a gradual experience of mankind, it is gradually contracted, and reduced

duced to narrower bounds. To ſay therefore that our diffidence in teſtimony is the reſult of experience, is more philoſophical, becauſe more conſonant to truth, than to ſay that our faith in teſtimony has this foundation. Accordingly youth, which is unexperienc'd, is credulous; age, on the contrary, is diſtruſtful. Exactly the reverſe would be the caſe, were this author's doctrine juſt.

Perhaps it will be ſaid, If experience is allowed to be the only meaſure of a logical or reaſonable faith in teſtimony, the queſtion, *Whether the influence of teſtimony on belief, be original or deriv'd?* if 'tis not merely verbal, is at leaſt of no importance in the preſent controverſy. Far otherwiſe. The difference between us is by no means ſo inconſiderable, as to a careleſs view it may appear. According to his philoſophy, the preſumption lies againſt the teſtimony, or (which amounts

to

to the ſame thing) there is not the ſmalleſt preſumption in its favour, till properly ſupported by experience. According to the explication given above, there lies the ſtrongeſt preſumption in favour of the teſtimony, till properly refuted by experience.

If it be objected by the author, that ſuch a faith in teſtimony as is prior to experience, muſt be unreaſonable and unphiloſophical, becauſe unaccountable; I ſhould reply, that there are, and muſt be, in human nature, ſome original grounds of belief, beyond which our reſearches cannot proceed, and of which therefore 'tis vain to attempt a rational account. I ſhould deſire the objector to give a reaſonable account of his faith in this principle, that *ſimilar cauſes always produce ſimilar effects*; or in this, that *the courſe of nature will be the ſame to-morrow, that it was yeſterday, and is to-day:* principles, which he himſelf acknowledges,

ledges, are neither intuitively evident, nor deduced from premiſes; and which nevertheleſs we are under a neceſſity of preſuppoſing, in all our reaſonings from experience *. I ſhould deſire him to give a reaſonable account of his faith in the cleareſt informations of his memory, which he will find it alike impoſſible either to doubt, or to explain. Indeed memory bears nearly the ſame relation to experience, that teſtimony does. Certain it is that the defects and miſrepreſentations of memory are often corrected by experience. Yet ſhould any perſon hence infer, that memory derives all its evidence from experience, he would fall into a manifeſt abſurdity. On the contrary, experience derives its origin ſolely from memory, and is nothing elſe but the general maxims or concluſions, we have form'd, from the compariſon of particular facts remem-

* Sceptical doubts. Part 2.

ber'd. If we had not previouſly given an implicit faith to memory, we had never been able to acquire experience. When therefore we ſay that memory, which gives birth to experience, may nevertheleſs in ſome inſtances be corrected by experience, no more is imply'd, but that the inferences form'd from the moſt lively and perſpicuous reports of memory, ſometimes ſerve to rectify the miſtakes which ariſe from ſuch reports of this faculty, as are moſt languid and confus'd. Thus memory, in theſe inſtances, may be ſaid to correct itſelf. The caſe is often much the ſame with experience and teſtimony, as will appear more clearly in the ſecond ſection, where I ſhall conſider the ambiguity of the word *experience*, as us'd by this author.

BUT how, ſays Mr Hume, is teſtimony then to be refuted? Principally in one

or

or other of these two ways: *first* and most directly by contradictory testimony; that is, when an equal or greater number of witnesses, equally or more credible, attest the contrary: *secondly*, by such evidence either of the incapacity or baseness of the witnesses, as is sufficient to discredit them. What, rejoins my antagonist, cannot then testimony be confuted by the extraordinary nature of the fact attested? Has this consideration no weight at all? That this consideration hath no weight at all, 'twas never my intention to maintain; that by itself it can very rarely, if ever, amount to a refutation against ample and unexceptionable testimony, I hope to make extremely plain. Who hath ever denied, that the uncommonness of an event related, is a presumption against its reality; and that chiefly on account of the tendency, which, experience teacheth us, and this author hath observed, some people

have to ſacrifice truth to the love of wonder *? The queſtion only is, How far does this preſumption extend? In the extent which Mr Hume hath aſſign'd it, he hath greatly exceeded the limits of nature, and conſequently of all juſt reaſoning.

In his opinion, "When the fact atteſted is ſuch as has ſeldom fallen under our obſervation, there is a conteſt of two oppoſite experiences, of which the one deſtroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the ſuperior can only operate on the mind, by the force which remains †." There is a metaphyſical, I had almoſt ſaid, a magical *balance* and *arithmetic*, for the weighing and ſubtracting of evidence, which he frequently recurs to, and with which he ſeems to fancy he could perform wonders. I wiſh he had been a little more explicit in teaching us how theſe rare inventions muſt be us'd.

* p. 184. † p. 179.

When

When a writer of genius and elocution expreſſes himſelf in general terms, he will find it an eaſy matter, to give a plauſible appearance to things the moſt unintelligible in nature. Such ſometimes is this author's way of writing. To a ſuperficial view his argument appears ſcarce inferior to demonſtration, but when narrowly canvaſs'd, 'tis impracticable to find an application, of which, in a conſiſtency with truth and reaſon, it is capable.

In confirmation of the remark juſt now made, let us try how his manner of arguing on this point can be applied to a particular inſtance. For this purpoſe I make the following ſuppoſition. I have liv'd for ſome years near a ferry. It conſiſts with my knowledge that the paſſage-boat has a thouſand times croſſed the river, and as many times return'd ſafe. An unknown man, whom I have juſt now met, tells me in a ſerious manner, that it

is loſt; and affirms, that he himſelf ſtanding on the bank, was a ſpectator of the ſcene; that he ſaw the paſſengers carried down the ſtream, and the boat overwhelm'd and daſh'd to pieces. No perſon, who is influenced in his judgment of things, not by philoſophical ſubtilties, but by common ſenſe, a much ſurer guide, will heſitate to declare, that in ſuch a teſtimony I have probable evidence of the fact aſſerted. But if leaving common ſenſe, I ſhall recur to metaphyſics, and ſubmit to be tutor'd in my way of judging by the eſſayiſt, he will remind me, "that there is here a conteſt of two oppo-"ſite experiences, of which the one de-"ſtroys the other, as far as its force goes, "and the ſuperior can only operate on "the mind by the force which remains." I am warn'd, that "the very ſame prin-"ciple of experience, which gives me a "certain degree of aſſurance in the teſti-

"mony

" mony of the witneſs, gives me alſo, in " this caſe, another degree of aſſurance, " againſt the fact, which he endeavours " to eſtabliſh, from which contradiction " there ariſes a counterpoiſe, and mutual " deſtruction of belief and authority *."

Well, I would know the truth, if poſſible; and that I may conclude fairly and philoſophically, how muſt I balance theſe oppoſite experiences, as you are pleas'd to term them? Muſt I ſet the thouſand, or rather the two thouſand inſtances of the one ſide, againſt the ſingle inſtance of the other? In that caſe, 'tis eaſy to ſee, I have nineteen hundred and ninety-nine degrees of evidence, that my information is falſe. Or is it neceſſary, in order to make it credible, that the ſingle inſtance have two thouſand times as much evidence, as any of the oppoſite inſtances, ſuppoſing them equal among themſelves; or ſuppo-

* p. 179.

ſing

ſing them unequal, as much as all the two thouſand put together, that there may be at leaſt an equilibrium? This is impoſſible. I had for ſome of thoſe inſtances, the evidence of ſenſe, which hardly any teſtimony can equal, much leſs exceed. Once more, muſt the evidence I have of the veracity of the witneſs, be a full equivalent to the two thouſand inſtances, which oppoſe the fact atteſted? By the ſuppoſition, I have no poſitive evidence for or againſt his veracity, he being a perſon whom I never ſaw before. Yet if none of theſe be the balancing, which the eſſay-writer means, I deſpair of being able to diſcover his meaning.

Is then ſo weak a proof from teſtimony incapable of being refuted? I am far from thinking ſo; tho' even ſo weak a proof could not be overturn'd by ſuch a contrary experience. How then may it be overturn'd? *Firſt*, by contradictory teſtimony.

Going

Going homewards I meet another perſon, whom I know as little as I did the former; finding that he comes from the ferry, I aſk him concerning the truth of the report. He affirms, that the whole is a fiction; that he ſaw the boat, and all in it, come ſafe to land. This would do more to turn the ſcale, than fifty thouſand ſuch contrary inſtances, as were ſuppos'd. Yet this wou'd not entirely remove ſuſpicion. Afterward a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, confirm the declaration of the ſecond. I ſhall then be quite at eaſe. Is this the only effectual way of confuting falſe teſtimony? No. I ſuppoſe *again*, that inſtead of meeting with any perſon who can inform me concerning the fact, I get from ſome, who are acquainted with the witneſs, information concerning his character. They tell me, he is notorious for lying; and that his lies are commonly forged, not with a view to intereſt, but

merely to gratify a malicious pleaſure, which he takes in alarming ſtrangers. This, tho' not ſo direct a refutation as the former, will be ſufficient to diſcredit his report. In the former, where there is teſtimony contradicting teſtimony, the author's metaphor of a balance may be us'd with propriety. The things weighed are homogeneal: and when contradictory evidences are preſented to the mind, tending to prove poſitions which cannot be both true, the mind muſt decide on the comparative ſtrength of the oppoſite evidences, before it yield to either.

But is this the caſe in the ſuppoſition firſt made? By no means. The two thouſand inſtances formerly known, and the ſingle inſtance atteſted, as they relate to different facts, tho' of a contrary nature, are not contradictory. There is no inconſiſtency in believing both. There is no inconſiſtency in receiving the laſt on weaker

weaker evidence, (if it be ſufficient evidence) not only than all the former together, but even than any of them ſingly. Will it be ſaid, that tho' the former inſtances are not themſelves contradictory to the fact recently atteſted, they lead to a concluſion that is contradictory? I anſwer, 'Tis true, that the experienced frequency of the conjunction of any two events, leads the mind to infer a ſimilar conjunction in time to come. But let it at the ſame time be remark'd, that no man conſiders this inference, as having equal evidence with any one of thoſe paſt events, on which it is founded, and for the belief of which we have had ſufficient teſtimony. Before then the method recommended by this author can turn to any account, it will be neceſſary for him to compute and determine with preciſion, how many hundreds, how many thouſands, I might ſay how many myriads of

inſtances, will confer ſuch evidence on the concluſion founded on them, as will prove an equipoize for the teſtimony of one ocular witneſs, a man of probity, in a caſe of which he is allow'd to be a competent judge.

There is in *arithmetic* a rule called REDUCTION, by which numbers of different denominations are brought to the ſame denomination. If this ingenious author ſhall invent a rule in *logic*, analogous to this, for reducing different claſſes of evidence to the ſame claſs, he will bleſs the world with a moſt important diſcovery. Then indeed he will have the honour to eſtabliſh an everlaſting peace in the republic of letters; then we ſhall have the happineſs to ſee controverſy of every kind, theological, hiſtorical, philoſophical, receive its mortal wound: for though, in every queſtion, we could not even then determine with certainty, on which ſide the truth

truth lay, we could always determine (and that is the utmoſt the nature of the thing admits) with as much accuracy as geometry and algebra can afford, on which ſide the probability lay, and in what degree. But till this metaphyſical *reduction* is diſcover'd, 'twill be impoſſible, where the evidences are of different orders, to aſcertain by *ſubtraction* the ſuperior evidence. We could not but eſteem him a blunderer in arithmetic, who being aſked, whether ſeven pounds or eleven pence make the greater ſum, and what is the difference? ſhould, by attending ſolely to the numbers, and overlooking the value, conclude that eleven pence were the greater, and that it exceeded the other by four. Muſt we not be equal novices in reaſoning, if we follow the ſame abſurd method? Muſt we not fall into as great blunders? Of as little ſignificancy do we find the balance. Is the value of things heterogeneal

to

to be determin'd merely by weight? Shall ſilver be weighed againſt lead, or copper againſt iron? If in exchange for a piece of gold, I were offer'd ſome counters of baſer metal, is it not obvious, that till I know the comparative value of the metals, in vain ſhall I attempt to find what is equivalent, by the aſſiſtance either of ſcales or arithmetic?

'TIS an excellent obſervation, and much to the purpoſe, which the late learned and pious Biſhop of Durham, in his admirable performance on the analogy of religion to the courſe of nature, hath made on this ſubject. "There is a very ſtrong preſumption," ſays he, "againſt the moſt "ordinary facts, before the proof of them, "which yet is overcome by almoſt any "proof. There is a preſumption of millions to one againſt the ſtory of Cæſar, "or of any other man. For ſuppoſe a num-

"ber

" ber of common facts, ſo and ſo circum-
" ſtanced, of which one had no kind of
" proof, ſhould happen to come into one's
" thoughts, every one would, without a-
" ny poſſible doubt, conclude them to be
" falſe. The like may be ſaid of a ſingle
" common fact *." What then, I may ſubjoin, ſhall be ſaid of an uncommon fact? In order to illuſtrate the obſervation above cited, ſuppoſe, firſt, one at random mentions, that at ſuch an hour, of ſuch a day, in ſuch a part of the heavens, a comet *will* appear; the concluſion from experience would not be as millions, but as infinite to one, that the propoſition is falſe. Inſtead of this, ſuppoſe you have the teſtimony of but one man of integrity, who is ſkill'd in aſtronomy, that at ſuch an hour, of ſuch a day, in ſuch a part of the heavens, a comet *did* appear; you will not heſitate one moment to give him credit.

* Part 2. chap. 2. § 3.

Yet

Yet all the preſumption that was againſt the truth of the firſt ſuppoſition, tho' almoſt as ſtrong evidence as experience can afford, was alſo againſt the truth of the ſecond, before it was thus atteſted.

Is it neceſſary to urge further, in ſupport of this doctrine, that as the water in the canal cannot be made to riſe higher than the fountain whence it flows; ſo it is impoſſible, that the evidence of teſtimony, if it proceeded from experience, ſhould ever exceed that of experience, which is its ſource? Yet that it greatly exceeds this evidence, appears not only from what hath been obſerv'd already, but ſtill more, from what I ſhall have occaſion to obſerve in the ſequel. One may ſafely affirm, that no conceivable concluſion from experience, can poſſeſs ſtronger evidence, than that which aſcertains us of the regular ſucceſſion and duration of day and night. The reaſon

is,

is, the inſtances on which this experience is founded, are both without number and without exception. Yet even this concluſion, the author admits, as we ſhall ſee in the third ſection, may, in a particular inſtance, not only be ſurmounted, but even annihilated by teſtimony.

Laſtly, let it be obſerved, that the immediate concluſion from experience is always *general*, and runs thus: 'This is the ordinary courſe of nature.' 'Such an event 'may reaſonably be expected, where all 'the circumſtances are entirely ſimilar.' But when we deſcend to particulars, the concluſion becomes weaker, being more indirect. For though all the *known* circumſtances be ſimilar, all the *actual* circumſtances may not be ſimilar: nor is it poſſible in any caſe to be aſſur'd (our knowledge of things being at beſt but ſuperficial) that all the *actual* circumſtances are *known* to us. On

the contrary, the direct concluſion from teſtimony is always *particular*, and runs thus: 'This is the fact in ſuch an 'individual inſtance.' The remark now made will ſerve both to throw light on ſome of the preceding obſervations, and to indicate the proper ſphere of each ſpecies of evidence. *Experience* of the paſt is the only rule whereby we can judge concerning the *future:* And as when the ſun is below the horizon, we muſt do the beſt we can by the light of the moon, or even of the ſtars; ſo in all caſes where we have no teſtimony, we are under a neceſſity of recurring to experience, and of balancing or numbering contrary obſervations *. But the evidence

* Where-ever ſuch balancing or numbering can take place, the oppoſite evidences muſt be entirely ſimilar. It will rarely aſſiſt us in judging of facts ſupported by teſtimony: for even where contradictory teſtimonies come to be conſidered, you will hardly find, that the characters of the witneſſes on the oppoſite ſides are ſo preciſely equal, as that an arithmetical operation ſhall

evidence reſulting hence, even in the cleareſt caſes, is acknowledged to be ſo weak, compar'd with that which reſults from te-

ſhall evolve the credibility. In matters of pure experience it hath often place. Hence the computations that have been made of the value of annuities, inſurances, and ſeveral other commercial articles. In calculations concerning chances, the degree of probability may be determin'd with mathematical exactneſs. I ſhall here take the liberty, tho' the matter be not eſſential to the deſign of this tract, to correct an overſight in the eſſayiſt, who always ſuppoſes, that where contrary evidences muſt be balanced, the probability lies in the remainder or ſurplus, when the leſs number is ſubtracted from the greater. The probability doth not conſiſt in the ſurplus, but in the ratio, or geometrical proportion, which the numbers on the oppoſite ſides bear to each other. I explain myſelf thus. In favour of one ſuppos'd event, there are 100 ſimilar inſtances, againſt it 50. In another caſe under conſideration, the favourable inſtances are 60, and only 10 unfavourable. Tho' the difference, or arithmetical proportion, which is 50, be the ſame in both caſes, the probability is by no means equal, as the author's way of reaſoning implies. The probability of the firſt event is as 100 to 50, or 2 to 1. The probability of the ſecond is as 60 to 10, or 6 to 1. Conſequently on comparing the different examples, tho' both be probable, the ſecond is thrice as probable as the firſt.

ſtimony, that the ſtrongeſt conviction built merely on the former, may be overturn'd by the ſlighteſt proof exhibited by the latter. Accordingly the future hath, in all ages and nations, been denominated the province of conjecture and uncertainty.

THUS I have ſhown, as I propos'd, that the author's reaſoning proceeds on a falſe hypotheſis. —— It ſuppoſeth teſtimony to derive its evidence ſolely from experience, which is falſe. —— It ſuppoſeth by conſequence, that contrary obſervations have a weight in oppoſing teſtimony, which the firſt and moſt acknowledged principles of human reaſon, or, if you like the term better, common ſenſe, evidently ſhows that they have not. —— It aſſigns a rule for diſcovering the ſuperiority of contrary evidences, which, in the latitude there given it, tends to miſlead the judgment, and

which

which 'tis impoſſible, by any explication, to render of real uſe.

SECTION II.

Mr Hume charged with ſome fallacies in his way of managing the argument.

IN the eſſay there is frequent mention of the word *experience*, and much uſe every where made of it. 'Tis ſtrange that the author hath not favour'd us with the definition of a term, of ſo much moment to his argument. This defect I ſhall endeavour to ſupply; and the rather, as the word appears to be equivocal, and to be us'd by the eſſayiſt in two very different ſenſes. The firſt and moſt proper ſignification of the word, which, for diſtinction's ſake, I ſhall call *perſonal* experience, is that given in the preceding ſection. 'It 'is,' as was obſerv'd, 'founded in *memo-* 'ry, and conſiſts ſolely of the general ma-

'xims

'xims or concluſions, that each individual 'hath form'd, from the compariſon of 'the particular facts he hath remem-'ber'd.' In the other ſignification, in which the word is ſometimes taken, and which I ſhall diſtinguiſh by the term *deriv'd*, it may be thus defin'd. 'It is 'founded in *teſtimony*, and conſiſts not on-'ly of all the experiences of others, which 'have thro' that channel been communi-'cated to us, but of all the general ma-'xims or concluſions we have form'd, from 'the compariſon of particular facts atteſt-'ed.'

In propoſing his argument, the author would ſurely be underſtood to mean only *perſonal* experience; otherwiſe, his making teſtimony derive its light from an experience which derives its light from teſtimony, would be introducing what logicians term a *circle in cauſes*. It would exhibit the ſame things alternately, as cauſes and effects

effects of each other. Yet nothing can be more limited, than the ſenſe which is convey'd under the term *experience*, in the firſt acceptation. The mereſt clown or peaſant derives incomparably more knowledge from teſtimony, and the communicated experience of others, than in the longeſt life he could have amaſſed out of the treaſure of his own memory. Nay, to ſuch a ſcanty portion the ſavage himſelf is not confin'd. If that therefore muſt be the rule, the only rule, by which every teſtimony is ultimately to be judged, our belief in matters of fact muſt have very narrow bounds. No teſtimony ought to have any weight with us, that doth not relate an event, ſimilar at leaſt to ſome one obſervation, which we ourſelves have had acceſs to make. For example, that there are ſuch people on the earth as negroes, could not, on that hypotheſis, be render'd credible to one who had never ſeen a negro, not

even

even by the moſt numerous and the moſt unexceptionable atteſtations. Againſt the admiſſion of ſuch teſtimony, however ſtrong, the whole force of the author's argument evidently ſtrikes. But that innumerable abſurdities would flow from this principle, I might eaſily evince, did I not think the taſk ſuperfluous.

The author himſelf is aware of the conſequences; and therefore, in whatever ſenſe he uſes the term *experience* in propoſing his argument; in proſecuting it, he with great dexterity ſhifts the ſenſe, and ere the reader is appriſed, inſinuates another. "'Tis a miracle," ſays he, "that "a dead man ſhould come to life, be- "cauſe that has never been obſerv'd in a- "ny age or country. There muſt there- "fore be an uniform experience againſt "every miraculous event, otherwiſe the "event would not merit that appella- "tion

" tion*." Here the phraſe, *an uniform experience againſt an event*, in the latter clauſe, is implicitly defin'd in the former, not what has never been obſerv'd BY US, but (mark his words) *what has never been obſerv'd* IN ANY AGE OR COUNTRY. Now, what has been obſerv'd, and what has not been obſerv'd, in all ages and countries, pray how can you, Sir, or I, or any man, come to the knowledge of? Only I ſuppoſe by teſtimony, oral or written. The perſonal experience of every individual is limited to but a part of one age, and commonly to a narrow ſpot of one country. If there be any other way of being made acquainted with facts, 'tis to me, I own, an impenetrable ſecret; I have no apprehenſion of it. If there be not any, what ſhall we make of that cardinal point, on which his argument turns? 'Tis in plain language, ' Teſtimony is not intitled to the leaſt de-

* p. 181.

'gree of faith, but as far as it is ſupport-
'ed by ſuch an extenſive experience, as if
'we had not had a previous and indepen-
'dent faith in teſtimony, we could never
'have acquir'd.'

How natural is the tranſition from one ſophiſm to another! You will ſoon be convinced of this, if you but attend a little to the ſtrain of the argument. "A miracle," ſays he, "is a violation of the laws of na-
"ture; and as a firm and unalterable ex-
"perience hath eſtabliſhed theſe laws, the
"proof againſt a miracle is as entire, as
"any argument from experience can poſ-
"ſibly be imagined *." Again, "As an
"uniform experience amounts to a proof,
"there is here a direct and full proof,
"from the nature of the fact, againſt the
"exiſtence of any miracle †." I muſt once more aſk the author, What is the

* p. 180. † p. 181.

preciſe

preciſe meaning of the words *firm*, *unalterable*, *uniform?* An experience that admits no exception, is ſurely the only experience, which can with propriety be term'd *uniform*, *firm*, *unalterable*. Now ſince, as was remark'd above, the far greater part of this experience, which compriſeth every age and every country, muſt be deriv'd to us from teſtimony; that the experience may be *firm*, *uniform*, *unalterable*, there muſt be no contrary teſtimony whatever. Yet by the author's own hypotheſis, the miracles he would thus confute, are ſupported by teſtimony. At the ſame time to give ſtrength to his argument, he is under a neceſſity of ſuppoſing, that there is no exception from the teſtimonies againſt them. Thus he falls into that parallogiſm, which is called *begging the queſtion*. What he gives with one hand, he takes with the other. He admits, in opening his

design, what in his argument he implicitly denies.

But that this, if possible, may be still more manifest, let us attend a little to some expressions, which one would imagine he had inadvertently dropt. "So "long," says he, "as the world endures, "I presume, will the accounts of miracles "and prodigies be found in all profane "history *." Why does he presume so? A man so much attach'd to experience, can hardly be suspected to have any other reason than this; because such accounts have hitherto been found in all the histories, profane as well as sacred, of times past. But we need not recur to an inference to obtain this acknowledgment. It is often to be met with in the essay. In one place we learn, that the witnesses for miracles are an infinite number †; in another, that all religious records of what-

* p. 174. † p. 190.

ever

ever kind abound with them *. I leave it therefore to the author to explain, with what consistency he can assert, that the laws of nature are establish'd by an uniform experience, (which experience is chiefly the result of testimony) and at the same time allow, that almost all human histories are full of the relations of miracles and prodigies, which are violations of those laws. Here is, by his own confession, testimony against testimony, and very ample on both sides. How then can one side claim a firm, uniform, and unalterable support from testimony?

It will be in vain to object, that the testimony for the laws of nature greatly exceeds the testimony for the violations; and that, if we are to be determin'd by the greater number of observations, we shall reject all miracles whatever. I ask, Why are the testimonies much more numerous in the one case than in the other? The answer is obvious: Natural occurrences are

* p. 191.

much

much more frequent than ſuch as are preternatural. But are all the accounts we have of the peſtilence to be rejected as incredible, becauſe, in this country, we hear not ſo often of that diſeaſe, as of the fever? Or, becauſe the number of natural births is infinitely greater than that of monſters, ſhall the evidence of the former be regarded as a confutation of all that can be advanced in proof of the latter? Such an objector needs to be reminded of what was prov'd in the foregoing ſection; that the oppoſite teſtimonies relate to different facts, and are therefore not contradictory; that the concluſion founded on them, poſſeſſeth not the evidence of the facts on which it is founded, but only ſuch a preſumptive evidence, as may be ſurmounted by the ſlighteſt poſitive proof. A general concluſion from experience is in compariſon but preſumptive and indirect; ſufficient teſtimony for a particular fact is direct and poſitive evidence.

I SHALL remark one other fallacy in this author's reaſoning, before I conclude this ſection. "The Indian prince," ſays he, "who refus'd to believe the firſt rela-"tions concerning the effects of froſt, "reaſoned juſtly; and it naturally requi-"red very ſtrong teſtimony to engage his "aſſent to facts, which aroſe from a ſtate "of nature, with which he was unac-"quainted, and bore ſo little analogy to "thoſe events, of which he had had con-"ſtant and uniform experience. Tho' "they were not contrary to his experience, "they were not conformable to it*." Here a diſtinction is artfully ſuggeſted, between what is *contrary* to experience, and what is *not conformable* to it. The one he allows may be prov'd by teſtimony, but not the other. A diſtinction, for which the author ſeems to have ſo great uſe, it will not be improper to examine.

* p. 179.

If my reader happen to be but little acquainted with Mr Hume's writings, or even with the piece here examin'd, I muſt intreat him, ere he proceed any farther, to give the eſſay an attentive peruſal; and to take notice particularly, whether in one ſingle paſſage, he can find any other ſenſe given to the terms *contrary to experience*, but that which has *not* been *experienced*. Without this aid, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed, that I found it difficult to convince the judicious, that a man of ſo much acuteneſs, one ſo much a philoſopher as this author, ſhould, with ſuch formality, make a diſtinction, which not only the eſſay, but the whole tenour of his philoſophical writings ſhows evidently to have no meaning. Is that which is contrary to experience a ſynonymous phraſe for that which implies a contradiction? If this were the caſe, there would be no need to recur to experience for a refutation; it would refute itſelf.

ſelf. But 'tis equitable that the author himſelf be heard, who ought to be the beſt interpreter of his own words. "When the "fact atteſted," ſays he, "is ſuch a one, "as has ſeldom fallen under our obſerva- "tion, here is a conteſt of two oppoſite "experiences *." In this paſſage, not the being *never* experienced, but even the being *ſeldom* experienced, conſtitutes an *oppoſite* experience. I can conceive no way but one, that the author can evade the force of this quotation; and that is, by obtruding on us, ſome new diſtinction between an *oppoſite* and a *contrary* experience. In order to preclude ſuch an attempt, I ſhall once more recur to his own authority. "'Tis no miracle that a man in ſeeming "good health, ſhould die of a ſudden." Why? "Becauſe ſuch a kind of death, "tho' more unuſual than any other, "hath yet been frequently obſerv'd to

* p. 179.

" happen. But 'tis a miracle that a dead " man ſhould come to life." Why? Not becauſe of any inconſiſtency in the thing. That a body ſhould be this hour inanimate, and the next animated, is no more inconſiſtent, than the reverſe, that it ſhould be this hour animated, and the next inanimate; though the one be common, and not the other. But the author himſelf anſwers the queſtion: " Becauſe " that has never been obſerv'd in any age " or country *." All the contrariety then that there is in miracles to experience, doth, by his own conceſſion, conſiſt ſolely in this, that they have never been obſerv'd; that is, they are not conformable to experience. To our experience perſonal or deriv'd he muſt certainly mean; to what we have had acceſs to learn of different ages and countries. To ſpeak beyond the knowledge we have attain'd, would be ri-

* p. 181.

diculous.

diculous. It would be firſt ſuppoſing a miracle, and then inferring a contrary experience, inſtead of concluding from experience, that the fact is miraculous.

Now I inſiſt, that as far as regards the author's argument, a fact perfectly unuſual, or not conformable to our experience, ſuch as, for aught we have had acceſs to learn, was never obſerv'd in any age or country, is as incapable of proof from teſtimony, as miracles are; that, if this writer would argue conſiſtently, he could never, on his own principles, reject the one, and admit the other. Both ought to be rejected, or neither. I would not, by this, be thought to ſignify, that there is no difference between a miracle and an extraordinary event. I know that the former implies the interpoſal of an inviſible agent, which is not implied in the latter. All that I intend to aſſert, is, that the author's argument ſtrikes equally a-

gainſt both. Why doth ſuch interpoſal appear to him incredible? Not from any incongruity he diſcerns in the thing itſelf. He doth not pretend it. But 'tis not conformable to his experience. "A miracle," ſays he, "is a tranſgreſſion of a law of nature *." But how are the laws of nature known to us? By experience. What is the criterion, whereby we muſt judge, whether the laws of nature are tranſgreſſed? Solely the conformity or diſconformity of events to our experience. This writer ſurely will not pretend, that we can have any knowledge *a priori*, either of the law, or the violation.

Let us then examine by his own principles, whether the King of Siam, of whom the ſtory he alludes to, is related by Locke †, could have ſufficient evidence, from teſtimony, of a fact ſo contrary to his experience, as the freezing of water. He

* p. 182. in the note.

† Eſſay on human underſtanding, book 4. chap. 15. § 5.

could

could juſt ſay as much of this event, as the author can ſay of a dead man's being reſtor'd to life. 'Such a thing was never 'obſerv'd, as far as I could learn, in any 'age or country.' If the things themſelves too are impartially conſider'd, and independently of the notions acquir'd by us in theſe northern climates, we ſhould account the firſt at leaſt as extraordinary as the ſecond. That ſo pliant a body as water ſhould become hard like pavement, ſo as to bear up an elephant on its ſurface, is as unlikely in itſelf, as that a body inanimate to-day, ſhould be animated to-morrow. Nay to the Indian monarch, I muſt think, that the firſt wou'd appear more a miracle, more contrary to experience, than the ſecond. If he had been acquainted with *ice* or frozen water, and afterward ſeen it become fluid, but had never ſeen nor learn'd, that after it was melted, it became hard again, the relation

tion muſt have appeared marvellous, as the proceſs from fluidity to hardneſs never had been experienced, tho' the reverſe often had. But I believe nobody will queſtion, that on this ſuppoſition it would not have appeared quite ſo ſtrange, as it did. Yet this ſuppoſition makes the inſtance more parallel to the reſtoring of the dead to life. The proceſs from animate to inanimate we are all acquainted with; and what is ſuch a reſtoration, but the reverſing of this proceſs? So little reaſon had the author to inſinuate, that the one was only *not conformable*, the other *contrary* to experience. If there be a difference in this reſpect, the firſt, to one alike unacquainted with both, muſt appear the more contrary of the two.

Does it alter the matter, that he calls the former "a fact which aroſe from a "ſtate of nature, with which the Indian "was unacquainted?" Was not ſuch a

ſtate

ſtate quite unconformable, or (which in the author's language I have ſhown to be the ſame) contrary to his experience? Is then a ſtate of nature which is contrary to experience, more credible than a ſingle fact contrary to experience? I want the ſolution of one difficulty: The author, in order to ſatisfy me, preſents me with a thouſand others. Is this ſuitable to the method he propoſes in another place, of admitting always the leſs miracle, and rejecting the greater *? Is it not, on the contrary, admitting without any difficulty the greater miracle, and thereby removing the difficulty, which he otherwiſe wou'd have had in admitting the leſs? Does he forget, that the exhibiting a ſtate of nature entirely different from what we experience at preſent, is one of thoſe enormous prodigies, which, in his account, render the Pentateuch ſo unworthy of credit †? "No

* p. 182. † p. 206.

"Indian,"

" Indian," ſays he in the note, " 'tis evi-
" dent, cou'd have experience that water
" did not freeze in cold climates. This
" is placing nature in a ſituation quite un-
" known to him, and 'tis impoſſible for
" him to tell *a priori*, what will reſult
" from it." This is preciſely, as if, in re-
ply to the author's objection from experi-
ence againſt the raiſing of a dead man (ſup-
poſe Lazarus) to life, I ſhould retort: ' Nei-
' ther you, Sir, nor any who live in this
' century can have experience, that a dead
' man could not be reſtor'd to life at the
' command of one divinely commiſſion'd
' to give a revelation to men. This is
' placing nature in a ſituation quite un-
' known to you, and 'tis impoſſible for
' you to tell *a priori*, what will reſult from
' it. This therefore is not contrary to
' the courſe of nature, in caſes where all
' the circumſtances are the ſame. As you
' never in your lifetime ſaw one veſted

' with

'with such a commission, you are as un-
'experienced, as ignorant on this point,
'as the inhabitants of Sumatra are of the
'frosts in Muscovy; you cannot there-
'fore reasonably, any more than they,
'be positive as to the consequences.'
Should he rejoin, as doubtless he would,
'This is not taking away the difficulty;
'but, like the elephant and the tortoise, in
'the account given by some barbarians
'of the manner in which the earth is sup-
'ported, it only shifts the difficulty a step
'further back. My objection still recurs.
'That any man should be endow'd with
'such power is contrary to experience,
'and therefore incredible:' Should he, I
say, rejoin in this manner, I could only
add, 'Pray, Sir, revise your own words
'lately quoted, and consider impartially
'whether they be not as glaringly expos'd
'to the like reply.' For my part, I can
only perceive one difference that is mate-

rial between the two caſes. You frankly confeſs, that with regard to the freezing of water, beſides the abſolute want of experience, there would be from analogy a preſumption againſt it, which ought to weigh with a rational Indian. I think, on the contrary, in the caſe ſuppos'd by me, of one commiſſion'd by Heaven, there is at leaſt no preſumption againſt the exertion of ſuch a miraculous power. There is rather a preſumption in its favour.

Does the author then ſay, that no teſtimony could give the King of Siam ſufficient evidence of the effects of cold on water? No. By implication he ſays the contrary: "It required very ſtrong teſti-"mony." Will he ſay, that thoſe moſt aſtoniſhing effects of electricity lately diſcover'd, ſo entirely unanalogous to every thing before experienced, will he ſay, that ſuch facts no reaſonable man could have ſufficient evidence from teſtimony to believe? No.

No. We may preſume, he will not, from his deciſion in the former caſe; and if he ſhould, the common ſenſe of mankind would reclaim againſt his extravagance. Yet 'tis obvious to every conſiderate reader, that his argument ſtrikes equally againſt thoſe truly marvellous, as againſt miraculous events; both being alike unconformable, or alike contrary to former experience *.

THUS

* I cannot forbear to obſerve, that many of the principal terms employ'd in the eſſay, are us'd in a manner extremely vague and unphiloſophical. I have remark'd the confuſion I find in the application of the words, *experience*, *contrariety*, *conformity*. I might remark the ſame thing of the word, *miracle*. "A miracle," 'tis ſaid, *p.* 182. *in the note*, "may "be accurately defin'd, *A* TRANSGRESSION *of a law of na-* "*ture, by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interpo-* "*ſal of ſome inviſible agent.*" The word *tranſgreſſion* invariably denotes a criminal oppoſition to authority. The author's accuracy in repreſenting God as a tranſgreſſor, I have not indeed the perſpicacity to diſcern. Does he intend, by throwing ſomething monſtrous into the definition, to infuſe into the read-

THUS I think I have ſhown, that the author is chargeable with ſome fallacies, in his way of managing the argument; —— that he all along avails himſelf of an ambiguity in the word *experience*; —— that

er a prejudice againſt the thing defin'd? But ſuppoſing that thro' inadvertency, he had us'd the term *tranſgreſſion*, inſtead of *ſuſpenſion*, which would have been both intelligible and proper; one would at leaſt expect, that the word *miracle* in the eſſay, always expreſt the ſenſe of the definition. But this it evidently does not. Thus in the inſtance of the miracle ſuppos'd (*p.* 203. *in the note*) he calls it, in the beginning of the para- " graph, " A violation of the uſual courſe of nature;" but in the end, after telling us that ſuch a miracle, on the evidence ſuppos'd, " our preſent philoſophers ought to receive for cer- " tain," he ſubjoins, (how conſiſtently, let the reader judge) " and ought to ſearch for the cauſes, whence it might be de- " riv'd." Thus it is inſinuated, that tho' a fact apparently miraculous, and perfectly extraordinary, might be admitted by a philoſopher, ſtill the reality of the miracle muſt be denied. For if the interpoſal of the Deity be the proper ſolution of the phenomenon, why recur to natural cauſes? Hence a careleſs reader is inſenſibly led to think, that there is ſome ſpecial incredibility in ſuch an interpoſal, diſtinct from its uncommonneſs.

Yet

that his reaſoning includes a *petitio principii* in the boſom of it;——and that, in ſupporting his argument, he muſt have recourſe to diſtinctions, where, even himſelf being judge, there is no difference.

SECTION III.

Mr Hume himſelf gives up his favourite argument.

'MR Hume himſelf,' methinks I hear my reader repeating with aſtoniſhment, 'gives up his favourite argument! 'To prove this point is indeed a very bold 'attempt.' Yet that this attempt is not al-

Yet the author's great argument is built on that ſingle circumſtance, and places ſuch an interpoſition juſt on the ſame footing with every event that is equally uncommon. At one time, he uſes the word *miracle* to denote a *bare improbability*, as will appear in the ſixth ſection: at another, *abſurd* and *miraculous* are, with him, ſynonymous terms; ſo are alſo the *miraculous nature* of an event, and its *abſolute impoſſibility*. Is this the ſtyle of a reaſoner, or of a declaimer?

together

together ſo arduous, as at firſt hearing, he will poſſibly imagine, I hope, if favour'd a while with his attention, fully to convince him. If to acknowledge, after all, that there may be miracles, which admit of proof from human teſtimony; if to acknowledge, that ſuch miracles ought to be receiv'd, not as probable only, but as abſolutely certain; or, in other words, that the proof from human teſtimony may be ſuch, as that all the contrary uniform experience, ſhould not only be overbalanced, but, to uſe the author's expreſſion, ſhould be annihilated; if ſuch acknowledgments as theſe, are ſubverſive of his own principles; if by making them, he abandons his darling argument; this ſtrange part the eſſayiſt evidently acts.

" I own," theſe are his words, " there " may poſſibly be miracles, or violations " of the uſual courſe of nature, of ſuch a " kind as to admit of proof from human " teſtimony,

" teſtimony, tho' perhaps" (in this he is modeſt enough, he avers nothing; *perhaps*) " it will be impoſſible to find any ſuch in " all the records of hiſtory." To this declaration he ſubjoins the following ſuppoſition: " Suppoſe all authors, in all lan- " guages, agree, that from the 1ſt of Ja- " nuary 1600, there was a total darkneſs " over the whole earth for eight days; " ſuppoſe that the tradition of this extra- " ordinary event, is ſtill ſtrong and lively " among the people; that all travellers, " who return from foreign countries, " bring us accounts of the ſame tradition, " without the leaſt variation or contradic- " tion: 'tis evident, that our preſent philo- " ſophers, inſtead of doubting of that " fact, ought to receive it for certain, and " ought to ſearch for the cauſes, whence " it might be deriv'd *."

Could one imagine, that the perſon who

* p. 203. in the note.

had

had made the above acknowledgment, a perſon too who is juſtly allow'd by all who are acquainted with his writings, to poſſeſs uncommon penetration and philoſophical abilities, that this were the ſame individual, who had ſo ſhort while before affirm'd, that "a miracle," or a violation of the uſual courſe of nature, "ſupported "by any human teſtimony, is more pro- "perly a ſubject of deriſion than of argu- "ment *;" who had inſiſted, that "it is "not requiſite, in order to reject the fact, "to be able accurately to diſprove the te- "ſtimony, and to trace its falſehood; "that ſuch an evidence carries falſehood "on the very face of it †;" that "we need "but oppoſe even to a cloud of witneſſes, "the abſolute impoſſibility, or," which is all one, "miraculous nature of the events, "which they relate; that this in the eyes "of all reaſonable people, will alone be

* p. 194. † ib.

"regarded

" regarded as a ſufficient refutation *;" and who finally to put an end to all altercation on the ſubject, had pronounced this *oracle*. "No TESTIMONY FOR ANY KIND " OF MIRACLE CAN EVER POS- " SIBLY AMOUNT TO A PROBABILITY, " MUCH LESS TO A PROOF †." Was there ever a more glaring contradiction?

YET for the event ſuppos'd by the eſſayiſt, the teſtimony, in his judgment, would amount to a *probability*; nay to more than a probability, to a *proof*; let not the reader be aſtoniſh'd, or if he cannot fail to be aſtoniſh'd, let him not be incredulous, when I add, to *more than a proof*, more than a full, entire, and direct proof; for even this I hope to make evident from the author's principles and reaſoning. " And even ſuppoſing," ſays he, that is, granting for argument's ſake,

* p. 196. &c. † p. 202.

" that the teſtimony for a miracle a-
" mounted to a proof, 'twould be oppos'd
" by another proof, deriv'd from the very
" nature of the fact, which it would en-
" deavour to eſtabliſh *." Here is then, by his own reaſoning, proof againſt proof, from which there could reſult no belief or opinion, unleſs the one is conceiv'd to be in ſome degree ſuperior to the other. " Of
" which proofs," ſays he, " the ſtrongeſt
" muſt prevail, but ſtill with a diminu-
" tion of its force, in proportion to that
" of its antagoniſt †." Before the author could believe ſuch a miracle as he ſuppoſes, he muſt at leaſt be ſatisfied, that the proof of it from teſtimony is ſtronger than the proof againſt it from experience. That we may form an accurate judgment of the ſtrength he here imputes to teſtimony, let us conſider what, by his own account, is the ſtrength of the oppoſite proof from

* p. 202. † p. 180.

experience.

experience. "A miracle is a violation of "the laws of nature; and as a firm and "unalterable experience has eſtabliſhed "theſe laws, the proof againſt a miracle, "from the very nature of the fact, is as "*entire*, as any argument from expe- "rience can poſſibly be imagined*." Again, "As an uniform experience a- "mounts to a proof, there is here a *direct* "and *full* proof, from the nature of the "fact, againſt the exiſtence of any mi- "racle †." The proof then which the eſſayiſt admits from teſtimony, is, by his own eſtimate, not only ſuperior to a *direct* and *full* proof; but even ſuperior to as *entire* a proof, as any argument from experience can poſſibly be imagin'd. Whence, I pray, doth teſtimony acquire ſuch amazing evidence? 'Teſtimony,' ſays the author, 'hath no evidence, but what it 'derives from experience. Theſe differ

* p. 180. † p. 181.

'from each other only as the ſpecies from 'the genus.' Put then for *teſtimony*, the word *experience*, which in this caſe is equivalent, and the concluſion will run thus: *Here is a proof from experience, which is ſuperior to as entire a proof from experience, as can poſſibly be imagin'd.* This deduction from the author's words, the reader will perceive, is ſtrictly logical. What the meaning of it is, I leave to himſelf to explain.

What hath been above deduced, how much ſoever it be accounted, is not all that is implied in the conceſſion made by the author. He further ſays, that the miraculous fact ſo atteſted, ought not only to be receiv'd, but to be receiv'd *for certain.* Is it not enough, Sir, that you have ſhown that your moſt full, moſt direct, moſt perfect argument may be overcome; will nothing ſatisfy you now but its deſtruction? One would imagine, that you had conjur'd

jur'd up this demon, by whoſe irreſiſtible arm you propos'd to give a mortal blow to religion, and render ſcepticiſm triumphant, (that you had conjur'd him up, I ſay) for no other purpoſe, but to ſhow with what facility you could lay him. To be ſerious, does not this author remember, that he had oftener than once laid it down as a maxim, That when there is proof againſt proof, we muſt incline to the ſuperior, ſtill with a diminution of aſſurance, in proportion to the force of its antagoniſt *? But when a fact is received *for certain*, there can be no ſenſible diminution of aſſurance, ſuch diminution always implying ſome doubt and *uncertainty*. Conſequently the general proof from experience, tho' as entire as any argument from experience can poſſibly be imagin'd, is not only ſurmounted, but is really in compariſon as nothing, or, in Mr Hume's

* p. 178. 180.

phraſe,

phraſe, undergoes annihilation, when balanced with the particular proof from teſtimony. Great indeed, it muſt be acknowledged, is the force of truth. This concluſion, on the principles I have been endeavouring to eſtabliſh, has nothing in it, but what is conceivable and juſt; but on the principles of the eſſay, which derive all the force of teſtimony from experience, ſerves only to confound the underſtanding, and to involve the ſubject in midnight darkneſs.

'TIS therefore manifeſt, that either this author's principles condemn his own method of judging, with regard to miraculous facts; or that his method of judging ſubverts his principles, and is a tacit deſertion of them. Thus that impregnable fortreſs, the aſylum of infidelity, which he ſo lately gloried in having erected, is in a moment abandon'd by him, as a place untenable.

SEC-

SECTION IV.

There is no peculiar presumption against such miracles as are said to have been wrought in support of religion.

IS it then so, that the decisive argument, the essayist flatter'd himself he had discovered *, which with the wise and learned, was to prove an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and wou'd consequently be useful, as long as the world endures; is it so, that this boasted argument hath in fact little or no influence on the discoverer himself! But this author may well be excus'd. He cannot be always the metaphysician. He cannot soar incessantly in the clouds. Such constant elevation suits not the lot of humanity. He must sometimes, whether he will or not, descend to a level with other

* p. 174.

people,

people, and fall into the humble track of common ſenſe. One thing however he is reſolv'd on: If he cannot by metaphyſic ſpells ſilence the moſt arrogant bigotry and ſuperſtition; he will at any rate, though for this purpoſe he ſhou'd borrow aid from what he hath no liking to, trite and popular topics; he will at any rate free himſelf from their impertinent ſolicitations.

There are accordingly two principles in human nature, by which he accounts for all the relations, that have ever been in the world, concerning miracles. Theſe principles are, the *paſſion for the marvellous*, and the *religious affection* *; againſt either of which ſingly, the philoſopher, he ſays, ought ever to be on his guard; but incomparably more ſo, when both happen to be in ſtrict confederacy together. " For if " the ſpirit of religion join itſelf to the

* p. 184. 185.

" love

" love of wonder, there is an end of com-
" mon ſenſe; and human teſtimony in
" theſe circumſtances loſes all pretenſions
" to authority *." Notwithſtanding this ſtrong affirmation, there is reaſon to ſuſpect that the author is not in his heart, ſo great an enemy to the love of wonder, as he affects to appear. No man can make a greater conceſſion in favour of the wonderful, than he hath done in the paſſage quoted in the preceding ſection. No man was ever fonder of paradox, and, in theoretical ſubjects, of every notion that is remote from ſentiments univerſally receiv'd. This love of paradoxes, he owns himſelf, that both his enemies and his friends reproach him with †. There muſt ſurely be ſome foundation for ſo univerſal a cenſure. If therefore, in reſpect of the paſſion for the marvellous, he differ from other people, the difference ariſeth from a

* p. 185. † Dedication to the four diſſertations.

particular delicacy in this gentleman, which makes him nauſeate even to wonder with the crowd. He is of that ſingular turn that where every body is ſtruck with conſternation, he can ſee nothing wondrous in the leaſt; at the ſame time he diſcovers prodigies, where no ſoul but himſelf ever dreamt that there were any.

We may therefore reſt aſſured of it, that the author might be conciliated to the *love of wonder*, provided the *ſpirit of religion* be kept at a diſtance, againſt which he hath unluckily contracted a mortal antipathy, againſt which he is reſolv'd to wage eternal war. When he but touches this ſubject, he loſeth at once his philoſophic compoſure, and ſpeaks with an acrimony unuſual to him on other occaſions. Something of this kind appears from the citations already made. But if theſe ſhou'd not ſatisfy, I ſhall produce one or two more, which cannot fail. There is a ſecond

cond ſuppoſition the author makes, of a miraculous event, in a certain manner circumſtanced and atteſted, which he declares, and I think with particular propriety, that he would "not have the leaſt *inclination* to believe *." At his want of inclination the reader will not be ſurpriſed, when he learns, that this ſuppoſed miracle is concerning a *reſurrection*; an event which bears too ſtrong a reſemblance both to the doctrine and miracles of holy writ, not to alarm a modern Pyrrhoniſt. To the above declaration he ſubjoins, "But ſhou'd this "miracle be aſcrib'd to any new ſyſtem "of religion, men in all ages have been "ſo much impos'd on by *ridiculous ſtories* "of that kind, that this very circum-"ſtance would be a full proof of a cheat, "and ſufficient with all men of ſenſe, not "only to make them reject the fact, but "even *reject it without further examina-*

* p. 204. in the note.

" *tion.*" Again, a little after, " As the vio-
" lations of truth are more common in
" the teſtimony concerning religious mi-
" racles, than in that concerning any
" other matter of fact," (a point in which the author is poſitive, tho' he neither produceth facts nor arguments to ſupport it) " this muſt diminiſh very much the au-
" thority of the former teſtimony, and" (pray obſerve his words) " *make us form a*
" GENERAL RESOLUTION, *never to lend*
" *any attention to it, with whatever ſpecious*
" *pretext it may be cover'd.*"

Never did the paſſion of an inflamed orator, or the intemperate zeal of a religioniſt, carry him further againſt his adverſary, than this man of ſpeculation is carried by his prejudice againſt religion. Demagogues and bigots have often warn'd the people againſt liſtening to the arguments of an envied and therefore deteſted rival, leſt by his ſophiſtry they ſhould be

ſeduced

ſeduced into the moſt fatal errors. The ſame part this author, a philoſopher, a ſceptic, a diſpaſſionate inquirer after truth, as ſurely he chuſeth to be accounted, now acts in favour of infidelity. He thinks it not ſafe to give religion even a hearing. Nay ſo ſtrange a turn have matters taken of late with the managers of this controverſy, that it is now the FREETHINKER who preaches *implicit faith*; 'tis the INFIDEL who warns us of the danger of conſulting *reaſon*. Beware, ſays he, I admoniſh you, of inquiring into the ſtrength of the plea, or of bringing it to the deceitful teſt of reaſon; for "thoſe who will be "ſo SILLY as to examine the affair by "that medium, and ſeek particular flaws "in the *teſtimony*, are almoſt ſure to be "confounded *." That religion is concern'd in the matter, is reckon'd by theſe ſages ſufficient evidence of impoſture. The

* p. 197. in the note.

proofs

proofs ſhe offers in her own defence, we are told by this candid judge, ought to be rejected, and *rejected without examination.* The old way of ſcrutiny and argument muſt now be ſet aſide, having been at length diſcover'd to be but a bungling, a tedious, and a dangerous way at beſt. What then ſhall we ſubſtitute in its place? The eſſayiſt hath a moſt admirable expedient. A ſhorter and ſurer method he recommends to us, the expeditious way of *reſolution.* 'Form,' ſays he, 'a GENERAL 'RESOLUTION, *never to lend any atten-* 'tion to teſtimonies or facts urged by religion, 'with whatever ſpecious pretext they may 'be cover'd.'

I had almoſt congratulated Mr Hume, and our enlighten'd age, on this happy invention, before I reflected, that tho' the application might be new, the expedient itſelf, of reſolving to be deaf to argument, was very ancient, having been often with great

great ſucceſs employ'd againſt atheiſts and heretics, and warmly recommended by Bellarmine and Scotus, and moſt others of that bright fraternity the ſchoolmen: Perſons, I acknowledge, to whom it would be difficult, perhaps in any other inſtance, to find a reſemblance in my ingenious opponent.

I'm afraid that after ſuch a declaration, I muſt not preſume to conſider myſelf as arguing with the author, who hath, in ſo peremptory a manner, reſolv'd to attend to nothing that can be ſaid on this ſubject, in oppoſition to his theory. 'What 'judgment he has,' to uſe his own expreſſion, 'he has renounced by principle, 'in theſe ſublime and myſterious ſub-'jects *.' If however it ſhould prove the fate of theſe papers, the forbidding title of them notwithſtanding, to be at any time honour'd with the peruſal of ſome infidel,

* p. 185.

not

not indeed ſo rivetted in unbelief as the eſſayiſt, I would earneſtly intreat ſuch reader, in the ſolemn ſtyle of Mr Hume, " To lay his hand upon his heart, and " after ſerious conſideration declare *," If any of the patrons of religion had acted this part, and warn'd people not to try by *argument* the metaphyſical ſubtleties of the adverſaries, affirming, that 'if they were 'MAD enough to examine the affair by that 'medium, and ſeek particular flaws in the '*reaſoning*, they were almoſt ſure to be con-'founded; that the only prudent method 'was, to form a GENERAL RESOLUTION, 'never to lend any attention to what was 'advanced on the oppoſite ſide, *however* '*ſpecious*;' would not theſe gentlemen have raiſed great ſubject of triumph from this conduct? would it not have been conſtru'd into a tacit conviction of the weakneſs of our cauſe, which we were afraid

* p. 206.

of

of expoſing in the light, and bringing to a fair trial? But we ſcorn to take ſhelter in obſcurity, and meanly to decline the combat; confident as we are, that REASON is our *ally* and our *friend*, and glad to find that the enemy at length ſo violently ſuſpects her.

As to the firſt method, by which the author accounts for the fabulous relations of monſters and prodigies, 'tis freely acknowledged, that the creator hath implanted in human nature, as a ſpur to the purſuit of knowledge, a principle of *curioſity*, which makes the mind feel a particular pleaſure in every new acquiſition. 'Tis acknowledged alſo, that as every principle in our nature is liable to abuſe, ſo this principle will often give the mind a bias to the marvellous, for the more marvellous any thing is, that is, the more unlike to all that hath formerly been known, the

more new it is; and this bias, in many inſtances, may induce belief on inſufficient evidence.

But the preſumption that hence ariſeth againſt the marvellous is not ſtronger in the caſe of miracles (as will appear from an attentive peruſal of the ſecond ſection) than in the caſe of every fact that is perfectly extraordinary. Yet how eaſily this obſtacle may be overcome by teſtimony, might be illuſtrated, if neceſſary, in almoſt every branch of ſcience, in phyſiology, in geography, in hiſtory. On the contrary, what an immenſe impediment would this preſumption prove to the progreſs of philoſophy and letters, had it in reality one fiftieth part of the ſtrength, which the author ſeems to impute to it. I ſhall not tire my reader or myſelf by recurring to the philoſophic wonders in electricity, chymiſtry, magnetiſm, which, all the world ſees, may be fully prov'd to us by

by teſtimony, before we make the experiments ourſelves.

But there is, it ſeems, additional to this, a peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles. "The wiſe," as the author hath obſerv'd with reaſon, "lend a "very academic faith to every report, "which favours the paſſion of the report-"er, whether it magnifies his country, "his family, or himſelf, or in any other "way ſtrikes in with his natural inclina-"tions and propenſities *." Now, as no object whatever operates more powerfully on the fancy than *religion* does, or works up the paſſions to a higher fervour; ſo, in matters relating to this ſubject, if in any ſubject, we have reaſon to ſuſpect that the underſtanding will prove a dupe to the paſſions. On this point therefore we ought to be peculiarly cautious, that we

* p. 200.

be not hafty of belief. In this ſentiment we all agree.

But there is one circumſtance, which he hath overlook'd, and which is nevertheleſs of the greateſt conſequence in the debate. It is this, that the prejudice reſulting from the religious affection, may juſt as readily *obſtruct*, as *promote* our faith in a religious miracle. What things in nature are more contrary, than one religion is to another religion? They are juſt as contrary as light and darkneſs, truth and error. The affections, with which they are contemplated by the ſame perſon, are juſt as oppoſite, as deſire and averſion, love and hatred. The ſame religious zeal which gives the mind of a Chriſtian, a *propenſity* to the belief of a miracle in ſupport of Chriſtianity, will inſpire him with an *averſion* from the belief of a miracle in ſupport of Mahometiſm. The

ſame

ſame principle, which will make him acquieſce in evidence *leſs* than ſufficient in the one caſe, will make him require evidence *more* than ſufficient in the other.

Before then the remark of the author can be of any uſe in directing our judgment, as to the evidence of miracles atteſted, we muſt conſider whether the original tenets of the witneſſes ought to have biaſſed their minds in *favour* of the miracles, or in *oppoſition* to them. If the former was the caſe, the teſtimony is ſo much the *leſs* to be regarded; if the latter, ſo much the *more*. Will it ſatisfy on this head to acquaint us, that the prejudices of the witneſſes muſt have favour'd the miracles, ſince they were zealous promoters of the doctrine, in ſupport of which thoſe miracles are ſaid to have been perform'd? To anſwer thus wou'd be to miſunderſtand the point. The queſtion is, Was this doctrine the faith of the

the witneſſes, before they ſaw, or fancied they ſaw the miracles? If it was, I agree with him. Great, very great allowance muſt be made for the prejudices of education, for principles, early perhaps, carefully, and deeply rooted in their minds, and for the religious affection founded in theſe principles; which allowance muſt always derogate from the weight of their teſtimony. But if the faith of the witneſſes ſtood originally in oppoſition to the doctrine atteſted by the miracles; if the only account that can be given of their converſion, is the conviction which the miracles produced in them; it muſt be a prepoſterous way of arguing, to derive their conviction from a religious zeal, which would at firſt obſtinately withſtand, and for ſome time hinder ſuch conviction. On the contrary, that the evidence ariſing from miracles perform'd in proof of a doctrine diſbeliev'd, and conſequently hated before, did

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in fact surmount that obstacle, and conquer all the opposition arising thence, is a very strong presumption in favour of that evidence: just as strong a presumption in its favour, as it would have been against it, had all their former zeal, and principles, and prejudices, co-operated with the evidence, whatever it was, in gaining an entire assent.

Hence there is the greatest disparity in this respect, a disparity which deserves to be particularly attended to, betwixt the evidence of miracles perform'd in proof of a religion *to be* establish'd, perform'd in *contradiction* to opinions generally receiv'd; and the evidence of miracles perform'd in support of a religion *already* establish'd, and in *confirmation* of opinions generally receiv'd. Hence also the greatest disparity betwixt the miracles recorded by the evangelists, and those related by Mariana, Bede, or any monkish historian.

THERE

THERE is then no peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles merely as ſuch; if in certain circumſtances there is a preſumption againſt them, the preſumption ariſeth ſolely from the circumſtances, inſomuch that, in the oppoſite circumſtances, it is as ſtrongly in their favour.

SECTION V.

There is a peculiar preſumption in favour of ſuch miracles as are ſaid to have been wrought in ſupport of religion.

IN this ſection I propoſe to conſider the reverſe of the queſtion treated in the former. In the former I prov'd that there is no peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles; I now inquire whether there be any in their favour. The queſtion is important, and intimately connected with the ſubject.

THE

THE boldeſt infidel will not deny, that the immortality of the ſoul, a future and eternal ſtate, and the connection of our happineſs or miſery in that ſtate, with our preſent good or bad conduct, not to mention the doctrines concerning the divine unity and perfections, are tenets which carry no abſurdity in them. They may be true for aught he knows. He doth not believe them, not becauſe they are incredible in themſelves, but becauſe he hath not evidence of their truth. He pretends not to diſprove them, nor does he think the taſk incumbent on him. He only pleads, that before he can yield them his aſſent, they muſt be prov'd.

Now, as whatever is poſſible, may be ſuppos'd, let us ſuppoſe that the dogmas above mentioned are all infallible truths; and let the unbeliever ſay, whether he can conceive an object worthier of the divine interpoſal, than to reveal theſe truths to

mankind; and to enforce them in ſuch a manner, as may give them a ſuitable influence on the heart and life. Of all the inhabitants of the earth, man is incomparably the nobleſt. Whatever therefore regards the intereſt of the human ſpecies, is a grander concern, than what regards either the inanimate or the brute creation. If man was made, as is doubtleſs not impoſſible, for an after ſtate of immortality; whatever relates to that immortal ſtate, or may conduce to prepare him for the fruition of it, muſt be immenſely ſuperior to that which merely concerns the tranſient enjoyments of the preſent life. How ſublime then is the object which religion, and religion only, exhibits as the ground of ſupernatural interpoſitions! It is the intereſt of man, a reaſonable and moral agent, the only being in this lower world which bears in his ſoul the image of his maker; not the intereſt of an individual,

but

but of the kind; not for a limited duration, but for eternity: an object at leaſt in one reſpect adequate to the majeſty of God.

Does this appear to the eſſayiſt too much like arguing *a priori*, of which I know he hath a deteſtation? It is juſt ſuch an argument, as, preſuppoſing the moſt rational principles of Deiſm, reſults from thoſe maxims concerning intelligent cauſes, and their operations, which are founded in general experience, and which uniformly lead us to expect, that the end will be proportionate to the means. The *Pagans* of Rome had notions of their divinities infinitely inferior to the opinions concerning God, which in Chriſtian countries are maintain'd even by thoſe, who, for diſtinction's ſake, are called DEISTS. Yet ſuch of the former as had any juſtneſs of taſte, were offended with thoſe poets, who exhibited the celeſtials on ſlight occaſions, and for trivial purpoſes, interfering

in the affairs of men. Why? Becauſe ſuch an exhibition ſhock'd all the principles of probability. It had not that veriſimilitude which is abſolutely neceſſary to render fiction agreeable. Accordingly it is a precept, with relation to the machinery of the drama, given by one who was both a critic and a poet, That a god muſt never be introduced, unleſs to accompliſh ſome important deſign, which could not be otherwiſe effectuated *. The foundation of this rule, which is that of my argument, is therefore one of thoſe indiſputable principles, which are found every where, among the earlieſt reſults of experience.

THUS it appears, that from the dignity of the end, there ariſeth a peculiar preſumption in favour of ſuch miracles, as

* Nec deus interſit, niſi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit. HORAT.

are

are ſaid to have been wrought in ſupport of religion.

SECTION VI.

Inquiry into the meaning and propriety of one of Mr Hume's favourite maxims.

THERE is a method truly curious, ſuggeſted by the author, for extricating the mind, ſhould the evidence from teſtimony be ſo great, that its falſehood might, as he terms it, be accounted miraculous. In this puzzling caſe, when a man is ſo beſet with miracles, that he is under a neceſſity of admitting one, he muſt always take care it be the ſmalleſt; for it is an *axiom* in this writer's DIALECTIC, That *the probability of the fact is in the inverſe ratio of the quantity of miracle there is in it.* "I weigh," ſays he, "the "one miracle againſt the other, and ac-"cording

" cording to the ſuperiority which I diſco-
" ver, I pronounce my deciſion, and al-
" ways reject the greater miracle *."

Now, of this method, which will no doubt be thought by many to be very ingenious, and which appears to the eſſayiſt both very momentous and very perſpicuous, I own, I am not able to diſcover either the reaſonableneſs or the uſe.

Firſt, I cannot ſee the reaſonableneſs. 'A miracle,' to adopt his own definition, 'implies the tranſgreſſion,' or rather the ſuſpenſion, 'of ſome law of nature; and 'that either by a particular volition of 'the Deity, or by the interpoſal of ſome 'inviſible agent †.' Now, as I ſhould think, from the principles laid down in the preceding ſection, that it would be for no trifling purpoſe, that the laws of nature would be ſuſpended, and

* p. 182. † Ib. in the note.

either

either the Deity or an invisible agent would interpose; 'tis on the same principles, natural to imagine, that the means, or miracle perform'd, should bear a proportion, in respect of dignity and greatness, to the end propos'd. Were I therefore under such a necessity as is suppos'd by Mr Hume, of admitting the truth of a miracle, I acknowledge, that of two contradictory miracles, where all other circumstances are equal, I should think it reasonable to believe the greater. I shall borrow an illustration from the author himself. "A miracle," he says, "may either be "*discoverable* by men or not. This alters "not its nature and essence. The raising "of a house or ship into the air is a visible "miracle; the raising of a feather, when "the wind wants *ever so little* of a force "requisite for that purpose, is as real a "miracle, tho' not so *sensible* with regard

"to

" to us *." Surely if any miracle may be called *little*, the laſt above mentioned is intitled to that denomination, not only becauſe it is an *undiſcoverable* and *inſenſible* miracle, but becauſe the quantum of miraculous force requiſite, is, by the hypotheſis, *ever ſo little*, or the leaſt conceivable. Yet if it were certain, that God, angel, or ſpirit, were, for one of thoſe purpoſes, to interpoſe in ſuſpending the laws of nature; I believe moſt men would join with me in thinking, that it wou'd be rather for the raiſing of a *houſe* or *ſhip*, than for the raiſing of a *feather*.

But though the maxim laid down by the author were perfectly juſt, I cannot diſcover in what inſtance, or by what application, it can be render'd of any utility. Why? Becauſe we have no rule, whereby we can judge of the greatneſs of miracles. I allow, that in ſuch a ſingular inſtance,

* p. 182. in the note.

as

as that above quoted from the eſſay, we may judge ſafely enough. But that can be of no practical uſe. In almoſt every caſe that will occur, I may warrantably aver, that it will be impoſſible for the acuteſt intellect to decide, which of two is the greater miracle. As to the author, I cannot find that he has favour'd us with any light, in ſo important and ſo critical a queſtion. Have we not then ſome reaſon to dread, that the taſk will not be leſs difficult to furniſh us with a *meaſure*, by which we can determine the magnitude of miracles; than to provide us with a *balance*, by which we can aſcertain the weight of teſtimonies and experiences?

If leaving the ſpeculations of the eſſayiſt, we ſhall, in order to be aſſiſted on this ſubject, recur to his example, and manner of judging; let us conſider the miracle which was recited in the third ſection, and which he declares, would, on the evi-

dence of ſuch teſtimony as he ſuppoſes, not only be probable, but certain. For my part, 'tis not in my power to conceive a greater miracle than that is. The whole univerſe is affected by it; the earth, the ſun, the moon, the ſtars. The moſt invariable laws of nature with which we are acquainted, even thoſe which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, and diſpenſe darkneſs and light to worlds, are violated. I appeal to the author himſelf, whether it could be called a greater, or even ſo great a miracle, that all the writers at that time, or even all mankind, had been ſeiz'd with a new ſpecies of epidemical delirium, which had given riſe to this ſtrange illuſion. But in this the author is remarkably unfortunate, that the principles by which he in fact regulates his judgment and belief, are often the reverſe of thoſe which he endeavours to eſtabliſh in his theory.

SHALL

SHALL I hazard a conjecture? It is, that the word *miracle*, as thus us'd by the author, is us'd in a vague and improper ſenſe, as a ſynonymous term for *improbable*; and that believing the *leſs*, and rejecting the *greater miracle*, denote ſimply believing what is *leaſt*, and rejecting what is *moſt improbable*; or ſtill more explicitly, believing what we think *moſt worthy of belief*, and rejecting what we think *leaſt worthy*. I am aware, on a ſecond peruſal of the author's words, that my talent in gueſſing may be juſtly queſtion'd. He hath in effect told us himſelf what he means. "When any one," ſays he, "tells me, "that he ſaw a dead man reſtor'd to life, "I immediately conſider with myſelf, "whether it be more *probable*, that this "perſon ſhould either deceive or be de-"ceiv'd, or that the fact he relates, ſhould "really have happen'd. I weigh the one "*miracle* againſt the other; and according

" to the ſuperiority which I diſcover, I " pronounce my deciſion, and always re- " ject the greater miracle. If the falſe- " hood of his teſtimony would be more " miraculous than the event which he re- " lates; then, and not till then, can he " pretend to command my belief or opi- " nion *." At firſt indeed one is ready to exclaim, What a ſtrange *revolution* is here! The belief of miracles then, even by Mr Hume's account, is abſolutely inevitable. Miracles themſelves too, ſo far from being impoſſible, or even extraordinary, are the commoneſt things in nature; ſo common, that when any miraculous fact is atteſted to us, we are equally under a neceſſity of believing a miracle, whether we believe the fact, or deny it. The whole difference between the eſſayiſt and us, is at length reduced to this ſingle point, Whether greater or ſmaller miracles

* p. 187.

are

are intitled to the preference. This myſtery however vaniſhes on a nearer inſpection. The ſtyle, we find, is figurative, and the author is all the while amuſing both his readers and himſelf with an unuſual application of a familiar term. What is call'd weighing of *probabilities* in one ſentence, is weighing of *miracles* in the next. If it were aſk'd, For what reaſon did not Mr Hume expreſs his ſentiment in ordinary and proper words? I could only anſwer, I know no reaſon but one, and that is, To give the appearance of novelty and grandeur to one of thoſe very harmleſs propoſitions, which by philoſophers are called *identical*, and which, to ſay the truth, need ſome diſguiſe, to make them paſs upon the world with tolerable decency.

What then ſhall be ſaid of the concluſion which he gives as the ſum and quinteſſence of the firſt part of the eſſay? The beſt

beſt thing, for aught I know, that can be ſaid, is, that it contains a moſt certain truth, tho' at the ſame time the leaſt ſignificant, that ever perhaps was uſher'd into the world with ſo much ſolemnity. In order therefore to make *plainer Engliſh* of his *plain conſequence*, let us only change the word *miraculous*, as apply'd to the falſehood of human teſtimony, into *improbable*, which in this paſſage is entirely equivalent, and obſerve the effect produced by this elucidation. " The plain conſe- " quence is, and 'tis a GENERAL MAX- " IM, *worthy of our attention*, That NO " TESTIMONY IS SUFFICIENT TO E- " STABLISH A MIRACLE ; UNLESS " THE TESTIMOMY BE OF SUCH A " KIND, THAT ITS FALSEHOOD WOULD " BE MORE IMPROBABLE, THAN " THE FACT WHICH IT ENDEAVOURS " TO ESTABLISH *." If the reader thinks

* p. 182.

himſelf

himſelf inſtructed by this diſcovery, I ſhould be loath to envy him the pleaſure he may derive from it.

PART

A

DISSERTATION

ON

MIRACLES.

PART II.

The miracles on which the belief of Chriſtianity is founded, are ſufficiently atteſted.

SECTION I.

There is no preſumption, ariſing from human nature, againſt the miracles ſaid to have been wrought in proof of Chriſtianity.

FROM what hath been evinced in the fourth and fifth ſections of the former part, with regard to religion in general, *two corollaries* are clearly deducible

deducible in favour of Chriſtianity. *One* is, That the preſumption ariſing from the dignity of the end, to ſay the leaſt of it, can in no religion be pleaded with greater advantage, than in the Chriſtian. *The other* is, That the preſumption ariſing from the religious affection, inſtead of weakening, corroborates the evidence of the goſpel. The faith of Jeſus was promulgated, and gained ground, not with the aſſiſtance, but in defiance, of all the religious zeal and prejudices of the times.

IN order to invalidate the *ſecond* corollary, it will poſſibly be urged, that proſelytes to a religious ſyſtem, different from that wherein they were educated, may be gain'd at firſt; either by addreſs and eloquence, or by the appearances of uncommon ſanctity, and rapturous fervours of devotion; that if once people have commenced proſelytes, the tranſition to enthu-

ſiaſm is almoſt unavoidable; and that enthuſiaſm will fully account for the utmoſt pitch both of credulity and falſeneſs.

Admitting that a few converts might be made by the aforeſaid arts, it is ſubverſive of all the laws of probability, to imagine, that the ſtrongeſt prepoſſeſſions, fortified with that vehement abhorrence which contradiction in religious principles rarely fails to excite, ſhould be ſo eaſily vanquiſh'd in multitudes. Beſides, the very pretext of ſupporting the doctrine by miracles, if a falſe pretext, would of neceſſity do unſpeakable hurt to the cauſe. The pretence of miracles will quickly attract the attention of all to whom the new doctrine is publiſhed. The influence which addreſs and eloquence, appearances of ſanctity and fervours of devotion, would otherwiſe have had, however great, will be ſuperſeded by the conſideration of what is infinitely more ſtriking and deciſive. The

miracles

miracles will therefore first be canvassed, and canvassed with a temper of mind the most unfavourable to conviction. 'Tis not solely on the testimony of the evangelists that Christians believe the gospel, tho' that testimony appears in all respects such as merits the highest regard; but it is on the success of the gospel; it is on the testimony, as we may justly call it, of the numberless proselytes that were daily made to a religion, opposing all the religious professions then in the world, and appealing, for the satisfaction of every body, to the visible and miraculous interposition of Heaven in its favour. The witnesses consider'd in this light, and in this light they ought to be consider'd, will be found more than 'a sufficient number:' and tho' perhaps there were few of them, what the author would denominate 'men of educa-' tion and learning;' yet, which is more essential, they were generally men of good

ſenſe, and knowledge enough to ſecure them againſt all deluſion, as to thoſe plain facts for which they gave their teſtimony; men who (in the common acceptation of the words) neither did, nor could derive to themſelves either intereſt or honour by their atteſtations, but did evidently endanger both.

It deſerves alſo to be remember'd, that there is here no contradictory teſtimony, notwithſtanding that both the founder of our religion and his adherents were from the firſt ſurrounded by inveterate enemies, who never 'eſteem'd the matter too inconſiderable to deſerve their attention or regard;' and who, as they could not want the means, gave evident proofs that they wanted not the inclination to detect the fraud, if there had been any fraud to be detected. They were jealous of their own reputation and authority, and foreſaw but too clearly, that the ſucceſs of Jeſus would give

give a fatal blow to both. As to the teſtimonies themſelves, we may permit the author to try them by his own rules *. There is here no oppoſition of teſtimony; there is no apparent ground of ſuſpicion from the character of the witneſſes; there is no intereſt which they could have in impoſing on the world; there is not a ſmall number of witneſſes, they are innumerable. Do the hiſtorians of our Lord deliver their teſtimony with doubt and heſitation? Do they fall into the oppoſite extreme of uſing too violent aſſeverations? So far from both, that the moſt amazing inſtances of divine power, and the moſt intereſting events, are related without any cenſure or reflection of the writers on perſons, parties, actions, or opinions; with ſuch an unparallell'd and unaffected ſimplicity, as demonſtrates, that they were neither themſelves animated by paſſion

* p. 178.

like

like enthuſiaſts, nor had any deſign of working on the paſſions of their readers. The greateſt miracles are recorded, with as little appearance either of doubt or wonder in the writer, and with as little ſuſpicion of the reader's incredulity, as the moſt ordinary incidents: A manner as unlike that of impoſtors as of enthuſiaſts; a manner in which thoſe writers are altogether ſingular; and I will add, a manner which can on no ſuppoſition be tolerably accounted for, but that of the truth, and not of the truth only, but of the notoriety, of the events which they related. They ſpoke like people, who had themſelves been long familiariz'd to ſuch acts of omnipotence and grace. They ſpoke like people, who knew, that many of the moſt marvellous actions they related, had been ſo publicly perform'd, and in the preſence of multitudes alive at the time of their writing, as to be uncontrovertible, and as

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in fact not to have been controverted, even by their bittereſt foes. They could boldly appeal on this head to their enemies. *A man*, ſay they, ſpeaking of their maſter *, *approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as* YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW. The objections of Chriſt's perſecutors againſt his doctrine, thoſe objections alſo which regard the nature of his miracles, are, together with his anſwers, faithfully recorded by the ſacred hiſtorians; 'tis ſtrange, if the occaſion had been given, that we have not the remoteſt hint of any objections againſt the reality of his miracles, and a confutation of thoſe objections.

BUT paſſing the manner in which the firſt proſelytes may be gain'd to a new religion, and ſuppoſing ſome actually gain'd,

* Acts ii. 22.

no

no matter how, to the faith of Jeſus; can it be eaſily accounted for, that even with the help of thoſe early converts, this religion ſhould have been propagated in the world, on the *falſe* pretence of miracles? Nothing more eaſily, ſays the author. Thoſe original propagators of the goſpel have been deceiv'd themſelves; for "a religioniſt may be an *enthuſiaſt*, and imagine he ſees what has no reality *."

Were this admitted, it would not, in the preſent caſe, remove the difficulty. He muſt not only himſelf imagine he ſees what has no reality, he muſt make every body preſent, thoſe who are no enthuſiaſts, nor even friends, nay he muſt make enemies alſo, imagine they ſee the ſame thing which he imagines he ſees; for the miracles of Jeſus were acknowledged by thoſe who perſecuted him.

That an *enthuſiaſt* is very liable to be

* p. 185.

impos'd

impos'd on, in whatever favours the particular ſpecies of enthuſiaſm, with which he is affected, none, who knows any thing of the human heart, will deny. But ſtill this frailty hath its limits. For my own part, I cannot find examples of any, even among enthuſiaſts, (unleſs to the conviction of every body they were diſtracted) who did not ſee and hear in the ſame manner as other people. Many of this tribe have miſtaken the reveries of a heated imagination, for the communications of the Divine Spirit, who never, in one ſingle inſtance, miſtook the operations of their external ſenſes. Without marking this difference, we ſhould make no diſtinction between the *enthuſiaſtic* character and the *frantic*, which are in themſelves evidently diſtinct. How ſhall we then account from *enthuſiaſm*, for the teſtimony given by the apoſtles, concerning the reſurrection of their maſter, and his aſcenſion into hea-

ven, not to mention innumerable other facts? In theſe it was impoſſible that any, who in the uſe of their reaſon were but one remove from *Bedlamites*, ſhould have been deceiv'd. Yet, in the preſent caſe, the unbeliever muſt even ſay more than this, and, accumulating abſurdity upon abſurdity, muſt affirm, that the apoſtles were deceiv'd as to the reſurrection and aſcenſion of their maſter, notwithſtanding that they themſelves had concerted the plan of ſtealing his body, and concealing it.

BUT this is not the only reſource of the infidel. If he is driven from this ſtrong hold, he can take refuge in another. Admit the apoſtles were not deceiv'd themſelves, they may nevertheleſs have been, thro' mere devotion and benevolence, incited to deceive the reſt of mankind. The religioniſt, rejoins the author, " may know " his

" his narration to be falſe, and yet perſe-
" vere in it, with the beſt intentions in
" the world, for the ſake of promoting ſo
" holy a cauſe *."

That little pious frauds, as they are abſurdly, not to ſay impiouſly, called, have been often practis'd by ignorant zealots, in ſupport of a cauſe, which they firmly believ'd to be both true and holy, is not indeed to be queſtion'd. But in all ſuch caſes the truth and holineſs of the cauſe are wholly independent of thoſe artifices. A perſon may be perſuaded of the former, who is too clear-ſighted to be deceiv'd by the latter. In the Romiſh church, for example, there are many zealous and orthodox believers, who are nevertheleſs incapable of being impos'd on by the lying wonders, which ſome of their clergy have practis'd. The circumſtances of the apo-

* p. 185.

ſtles were widely different. Some of thoſe miraculous events which they atteſted, were not only the *evidences*, but the diſtinguiſhing *doctrines* of the religion which they taught. What were the tenets, by which they were diſtinguiſh'd, in their religious ſyſtem, particularly from the Phariſees, who own'd not only the unity and perfections of the Godhead, the exiſtence of angels and demons, but the general reſurrection, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments? Were not theſe their peculiar tenets, That 'Jeſus, whom the Jews 'and Romans join'd in crucifying with-'out the gates of Jeruſalem, had ſuffer'd 'that ignominious death, to make atone-'ment for the ſins of men *? that, in 'teſtimony of this, and of the divine ac-'ceptance, God had rais'd him from the 'dead? that he had exalted him to his 'own right hand, to be a prince and a

* Rom. v. 6. &c.

'ſaviour,

'saviour, to give repentance to the people, 'and the remiſſion of their ſins*? that 'he is now our advocate with the Fa- 'ther †? that he will deſcend from hea- 'ven at the laſt day, to judge the world 'in righteouſneſs ‡, and to receive his 'faithful diſciples into heaven, to be for- 'ever with himſelf ‖?' Theſe fundamental articles of their ſyſtem, they muſt have known, deſerv'd no better appellation than a ſtring of lies, if we ſuppoſe them liars in the teſtimony they gave of the reſurrection and aſcenſion of their maſter. If, agreeably to the Jewiſh hypotheſis, they had, in a moſt wonderful and daring manner, ſtole by night the corpſe from the ſepulchre, that on the report of his reſurrection, they might found the ſtupendous fabric they had projected among themſelves, how was it poſſible they ſhould conceive the cauſe to be either true or ho-

* Acts ii. 32. &c. v. 30. &c. x. 40. &c. † 1 Jo. ii. 1. ‡ Acts x. 42. xvii. 31. ‖ Jo. xiv. 3.

ly?

ly? They muſt have known, that in thoſe cardinal points, on which all depends, they were falſe witneſſes concerning God, wilful corrupters of the religion of their country, and public, though indeed diſintereſted incendiaries, whereſoever they went. They could not therefore enjoy even that poor ſolace, 'that the end will ſanctify 'the means;' a ſolace with which the monk or anchoret ſilences the remonſtrances of his conſcience, when, in defence of a religion which he regards as certain, he, by ſome pitiful juggler-trick, impoſeth on the credulity of the rabble. On the contrary, the whole ſcheme of the apoſtles muſt have been, and not only muſt have been, but muſt have appear'd to themſelves, a moſt audacious freedom with their maker, a villanous impoſition on the world, and I will add, a moſt fooliſh and ridiculous project of heaping ruin and diſgrace upon themſelves, without the proſpect of any compen-

compenſation in the preſent life, or reverſion in the future.

ONCE more, can we account for ſo extraordinary a phenomenon, by attributing it to that greateſt of all motives, as the author thinks it*, " an ambition to " attain ſo ſublime a character, as that " of a miſſionary, a prophet, an ambaſſa- " dor from heaven?"

Not to mention, that ſuch a towering ambition was but ill adapted to the mean rank, poor education, and habitual circumſtances, of ſuch men as the apoſtles moſtly had been; a deſire of that kind, whatever wonders it may effectuate, when ſupported by enthuſiaſm, and faith, and zeal, muſt have ſoon been cruſh'd by the outward, and to human appearance inſurmountable difficulties and diſtreſſes they had to encounter; when quite unſupport-

* P. 200.

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ed from within by either faith, or hope, or the teſtimony of a good conſcience; rather I ſhould have ſaid, when they themſelves were haunted from within by a conſciouſneſs of the blackeſt guilt, impiety, and baſeneſs. Strange indeed it muſt be own'd without a parallel, that in ſuch a cauſe, and in ſuch circumſtances, not only one, but all, ſhould have the reſolution to perſevere to the laſt, in ſpite of infamy and torture; and that no one among ſo many confederates, ſhould be induced to betray the dreadful ſecret.

THUS it appears, that no *addreſs* in the FOUNDER of our religion, no *enthuſiaſtic credulity*, no *pious frauds*, no *ambitious views*, in the FIRST CONVERTS, will account for its propagation on the plea of miracles, if falſe; and that conſequently there is no preſumption ariſing from *human nature* againſt the miracles ſaid to have

have been wrought in proof of Chriſtianity.

SECTION II.

There is no preſumption ariſing from the hiſtory of mankind, againſt the miracles ſaid to have been wrought in proof of Chriſtianity.

IN the foregoing ſection I reaſon'd only from the knowledge we acquire by experience, concerning *human nature*, and the motives by which we ſee that men are influenced in their conduct. I come now to the examination of facts, that I may know whether the *hiſtory of mankind* will invalidate or corroborate my reaſonings.

THE eſſayiſt is confident, that all the evidence reſulting hence is on his ſide.

Nay ſo unqueſtionable a truth does this appear to him, that he never attempts to prove it: he always preſuppoſeth it, as a point univerſally acknowledged. 'Men in 'all ages,' we learn from a paſſage already quoted, 'have been much impos'd on, by 'ridiculous ſtories of miracles aſcrib'd to 'new ſyſtems of religion*.' Again he aſſerts, that "the violations of truth are "more common in the teſtimony concern-"ing religious miracles, than in that con-"cerning any other matter of fact †." Theſe aſſertions however, tho' us'd for the ſame purpoſe, the attentive reader will obſerve, are far from conveying the ſame ſenſe, or being of equal weight in the argument. The difference hath been marked in the fourth ſection of the firſt part of this tract. The oracular predictions among the ancient Pagans, and the pretended wonders perform'd by capuchins and

* p. 204. in the note. † p. 205. in the note.

friars,

friars, by itinerant or ſtationary teachers among the Roman Catholics, the author will doubtleſs reckon among religious miracles; but he can with no propriety denominate them, miracles aſcrib'd to a new ſyſtem of religion*. Now 'tis with thoſe of

* Should the author inſiſt, that ſuch miracles are nevertheleſs meant to eſtabliſh, if not a new ſyſtem, at leaſt ſome *new point* of religion; that thoſe which are wrought in Spain, for example, are not intended as proofs of the goſpel, but as proofs of the efficacy of a particular *crucifix*, or *relic*; which is always a new point, or at leaſt not univerſally receiv'd: I muſt beg the reader will conſider, what is the meaning of this expreſſion, *a new point of religion*. It is not *a new ſyſtem*, 'tis not even *a new doctrine*. We know, that one article of faith in the church of Rome is, that the images and relics of ſaints ought to be worſhipped. We know alſo, that in proof of this article, 'tis one of their principal arguments, that miracles are wrought by means of ſuch relics and images. We know further, that that church never attempted to enumerate her relics and other trumpery, and thus to aſcertain the individual objects of the adoration of her votaries. The producing therefore a *new relic*, *image*, or *crucifix*, as an object of worſhip, implies not the ſmalleſt *deviation* from the *faith eſtabliſh'd*; at the ſame time the opinion, that *miracles* are perform'd by means of ſuch

of the claſs laſt mentioned, and with thoſe only, that I am concerned; for 'tis only to them that the miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity bear any analogy.

I ſhall then examine impartially this bold aſſertion, That 'men in all ages have 'been much impos'd on, by ridiculous 'ſtories of miracles aſcrib'd to new ſy-'ſtems of religion.' For my part, it appears to me clear as day, that there is not the ſhadow of truth in it. What could induce an author ſo well vers'd in the annals both of ancient and modern times as Mr Hume, in ſuch a poſitive manner to advance it, I am at a loſs to conceive. I believe it will require no elaborate diſquiſition to evince, th at theſe two, JUDAISM

relic, image, or crucifix, proves, in the minds of the people, for the reaſon aſſign'd, a very ſtrong *confirmation* of the *faith eſtabliſh'd*. All ſuch miracles therefore muſt be conſider'd, as wrought in ſupport of the receiv'd ſuperſtition, and accordingly are always favour'd by the popular prejudices.

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and CHRISTIANITY, are of all that have ſubſiſted, or now ſubſiſt in the world, the only religions, which claim to have been founded on the evidence of *miracles*. It deſerves alſo to be remarked, that it is more in conformity to common language, and incidental diſtinctions which have ariſen, than to ſtrict propriety, that I denominate Judaiſm and Chriſtianity, two religions. 'Tis true, the Jewiſh creed, in the days of our Saviour, having been corrupted by rabbinical traditions, ſtood in many reſpects, and at this day ſtands, in direct oppoſition to the goſpel. But when we conſider the religion of the Jews, not as the ſyſtem of faith and practice, which preſently obtains, or heretofore hath obtain'd among that people; but ſolely as the religion that is revealed in *the law and the prophets*, we muſt acknowledge, that in this inſtitution are contained the rudiments of the goſpel. The ſame great

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plan carried on by the divine providence, for the recovery and final happineſs of mankind, is the ſubject of both diſpenſations. They are by conſequence cloſely connected. In the former we are acquainted with the *occaſion* and *riſe*, in the latter more fully with the *progreſs* and *completion* of this benign contrivance. 'Tis for this reaſon that the ſcriptures of the *Old Teſtament*, which alone contain the authentic religion of the SYNAGOGUE, have ever been acknowledged in the CHURCH, an eſſential part of the *goſpel-revelation*. The apoſtles and evangeliſts, in every part of their writings, preſuppoſe the truth of the Moſaic economy, and often found both their doctrine and arguments upon it. 'Tis therefore, I affirm, only in proof of this one ſeries of revelations, that the aid of miracles hath with ſucceſs been pretended to.

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CAN the PAGAN religion, I ſhould rather ſay, can any of the numberleſs religions (for they are totally diſtinct) known by the common name of *Pagan*, produce any claim of this kind that will merit our attention? If the author knows of any, I wiſh he had mention'd it; for in all antiquity, as far as my acquaintance with it reacheth, I can recollect no ſuch claim. However, that I may not, on the one hand, appear to paſs the matter too ſlightly; or, on the other, loſe myſelf, as Mr Hume expreſſes it, in too wide a field; I ſhall briefly conſider, whether the ancient religions of *Greece* or *Rome* (which of all the ſpecies of Heatheniſh ſuperſtition are on many accounts the moſt remarkable) can preſent a claim of this nature. Will it be ſaid, that that monſtrous heap of fables we find in ancient bards, relating to the genealogy, production, amours and atchievements, of the gods, are the miracles on which

which Greek and Roman Paganiſm claims to be founded?

If one ſhould talk in this manner, I muſt remind him, *firſt*, that theſe are by no means exhibited as EVIDENCES, but as the THEOLOGY itſelf; the poets always uſing the ſame affirmative ſtyle concerning what paſſed in heaven, in hell, and in the ocean, where men could not be ſpectators, as concerning what paſſed upon the earth; *ſecondly*, that all thoſe mythological tales are confeſſedly recorded many centuries after they are ſuppoſed to have happened; no voucher, no teſtimony, nothing that can deſerve the name of evidence having been produced, or even alledged, in proof of them; *thirdly*, that the intention of the writers ſeems to be ſolely the amuſement, not the conviction of their readers; that accordingly no writer ſcruples to model the mythology to his particular taſte, or rather caprice; but all agree in arrogating

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on this, as being a province ſubject to the laws of Parnaſſus, the immemorial privilege of poets, to ſay and feign, unqueſtion'd, what they pleaſe; and *fourthly*, that at leaſt ſeveral of their narrations are allegorical, and as plainly intended to convey ſome phyſical or moral inſtruction, as any of the apologues of Æſop. But to have ſaid even thus much in refutation of ſo abſurd a plea, will perhaps to many readers appear ſuperfluous.

LEAVING therefore the endleſs abſurdities and incoherent fictions of idolaters, I ſhall inquire, in the next place, whether the MAHOMETAN worſhip (which in its ſpeculative principles appears more rational) pretends to have been built on the evidence of miracles.

Mahomet, the founder of this profeſſion, openly and frequently, as all the world knows, diſclaim'd ſuch evidence. He

frankly own'd, that he had no commiſſion nor power to work miracles, being ſent of God to the people only as a preacher. Not indeed but that there are things mentioned in the revelation he pretended to give them, which, if true, would have been miraculous; ſuch are the nocturnal viſits of the angel Gabriel, (not unlike thoſe ſecret interviews, which Numa, the inſtitutor of the Roman rites, affirm'd that he had with the goddeſs Egeria) his getting from time to time parcels of the uncreated book tranſmitted to him from heaven, and his moſt amazing night-journey. But theſe miracles could be no evidences of his miſſion, becauſe no perſon was witneſs to them. On the contrary, it was becauſe his adherents had previouſly and implicitly believ'd his apoſtleſhip, that they admitted things ſo incredible, on his bare declaration. There is indeed one miracle, and but one, which

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he often urgeth againſt the infidels, as the main ſupport of his cauſe; a miracle, for which even we in this diſtant region and period, have not only the evidence of teſtimony, but, if we pleaſe to uſe it, all the evidence which the cotemporaries and countrymen of this military apoſtle ever enjoy'd. The miracle I mean is the manifeſt divinity, or ſupernatural excellence, of the ſcriptures which he gave them; a miracle, concerning which I ſhall only ſay, that as it falls not under the cogniſance of the ſenſes, but of a much more fallible tribunal, taſte in compoſition, and critical diſcernment, ſo a principle of leſs efficacy than enthuſiaſm, even the ſlighteſt partiality, may make a man, in this particular, imagine he perceives what hath no reality. Certain it is, that notwithſtanding the many defiances, which the prophet gave his enemies, ſometimes to produce ten chapters, ſometimes one, that

could bear to be compar'd with an equal portion of the perſpicuous book *, they ſeem not in the leaſt to have been convinced, that there was any thing miraculous in the matter. Nay this ſublime performance, ſo highly venerated by every Muſſulman, they were not afraid to blaſpheme as contemptible, calling it, " A con-" fus'd heap of dreams," and " the ſilly " fables of ancient times †."

Paſſing therefore this equivocal miracle, if I may call it ſo, which I imagine was of very little uſe in *making* proſelytes, whatever uſe it might have had, in *confirming* and *tutoring* thoſe already made; it may be worth while to inquire, what were the reaſons, that an engine of ſuch amazing influence was never employ'd by one who aſſumed a character ſo eminent, as the

* Alcoran. The chapter — of the cow, — of Jonas, — of Hud.

† — Of cattle, — of the ſpoils, — of the prophets.

chief

chief of God's apoſtles, and the *ſeal of the prophets?* Was it the want of addreſs to manage an impoſition of this nature? None who knows the hiſtory of this extraordinary perſonage, will ſuſpect that he wanted either the genius to contrive, or the reſolution and dexterity to execute, any practicable expedient for promoting his grand deſign; which was no leſs than that extenſive deſpotiſm, both religious and political, he at length acquir'd. Was it that he had too much honeſty to concert and carry on ſo groſs an artifice? Thoſe who believe him to have been an impoſtor in pretending a divine miſſion, will hardly ſuſpect him of ſuch delicacy in the methods he would take to accompliſh his aim. But in fact there is no colour of reaſon for ſuch a ſuggeſtion. There was no prodigy, no miraculous interpoſition, which he heſitated to give out, however extravagant, when he ſaw it would contribute

to

to his ends. Prodigies of which they had no other evidence but his own allegation, he knew his adverſaries might *deny*, but could not *diſprove*. His ſcruples therefore, we may well conclude, proceeded not from *probity*, but *prudence*; and were ſolely againſt ſuch miracles, as muſt be ſubjected to the ſcrutiny of other people's ſenſes. Was it that miracle-working had before that time become ſo ſtale a device, that inſtead of gaining him the admiration of his countrymen, it would have expos'd him to their laughter and contempt? The moſt curſory peruſal of the Alcoran, will, to every man of ſenſe, afford an unanſwerable confutation of this hypotheſis *. Laſtly, was it that he liv'd in an enlighten'd

* It is obſerveable, that Mahomet was very much haraſs'd by the demands and reaſonings of his oppoſers with regard to miracles. They were ſo far from deſpiſing this evidence, that they conſidered the power of working miracles as a never-failing badge of the prophetical office; and therefore often aſſur'd him,

enlighten'd age, and amongſt a civiliz'd and learned people, who were too quick-ſighted to be deceiv'd by tricks, which among barbarians might have produced the

him, by the moſt ſolemn oaths and proteſtations, that they would ſubmit implicitly to his guidance in religion, if he would once gratify them in this particular. This artful man, who doth not ſeem to have been of the ſame opinion with the eſſayiſt, that it was an eaſy affair for cunning and impudence to impoſe, in a matter of this kind, on the credulity of the multitude, even tho' an ignorant and barbarous multitude, abſolutely refus'd to ſubject his miſſion to ſo hazardous a trial. There is no ſubject he more frequently recurs to in his Alcoran, (or *Koran*, as ſome chuſe to call it) being greatly intereſted to remove the doubts, which were rais'd in the minds of many by his diſclaiming this power; a power which till then had ever been look'd upon as the prerogative of the prophets. The following are ſome of the reaſons, with which he endeavours to ſatisfy the people on this head. 1ſt, The *ſovereignty* of God, who is not to be call'd to account for what he gives or withholds. 2d, The *uſeleſsneſs* of miracles, becauſe every man is foreordain'd either to believe, or to remain in unbelief; and this decree no miracles could alter. 3d, The *experienced inefficacy* of miracles in former times. 4th, The *mercy* of God, who had denied them this evidence, becauſe the ſin of their incredulity,

the moſt aſtoniſhing effects? Quite the reverſe. He liv'd in a barbarous age, and amongſt an illiterate people, with whom, if with any, he had reaſon to believe the groſſeſt deceit would prove ſucceſsful.

What pity was it, that Mahomet had not a counſellor ſo deeply vers'd in human nature as the eſſayiſt, who could have aſſur'd him, that there needed but effrontery and enterpriſe; that with theſe auxiliaries he had reaſon to hope the moſt impudent pretences would be crown'd with ſucceſs? The too timid prophet would doubtleſs have remonſtrated againſt this ſpirited counſel, inſiſting, that it was one thing to ſatisfy *friends*, and another

incredulity, in caſe he had granted it, would have been ſo heinous, that he could not have reſpited or tolerated them any longer. 5th, The *abuſe* to which miracles would have been expos'd from the infidels, who would have either charged them with impoſture, or imputed them to magic. See the chapters — of cattle, — of thunder, — of Al Hejir, — of the night-journey, — of the ſpider, — of the prophets.

thing

thing to silence or convert *enemies*; that it was one thing to impose on mens *intellects*, and another thing to deceive their *senses*: that tho' an attempt of the last kind should succeed with some, yet if the fraud were detected by any, and he might expect that his adversaries would exert themselves in order to detect it, the whole mystery of craft would be divulged, his friends would become suspicious, and the spectators of such pretended miracles would become daily more prying and critical; that the consequences would infallibly prove fatal to the whole design; and that therefore such a cheat was on no account whatever to be risked. To this methinks I hear the other replying with some earnestness, 'Make but the trial, and you 'will certainly find, that what judgment, 'nay and what senses your auditors have, 'they will renounce by principle in those 'sublime and mysterious subjects; they

'will imagine they ſee and hear what has
'no reality, nay whatever you ſhall deſire
'that they ſhould ſee and hear. Their cre-
'dulity (forgive a freedom which my zeal
'inſpires) will increaſe your impudence,
'and your impudence will overpower
'their credulity. The ſmalleſt ſpark may
'here kindle into the greateſt flame; be-
'cauſe the materials are always prepar'd
'for it. The *avidum genus auricularum*
'ſwallow greedily, without examination,
'whatever ſoothes ſuperſtition and pro-
'motes wonder.' Whether the judicious reader will reckon that the prophet or his counſellor would have had the better in this debate, I ſhall not take upon me to decide. One perhaps (if I might be indulged in a conjecture) whoſe notions are founded in metaphyſical refinements, or whoſe reſolutions are influenced by oratorical declamation, will incline to the opinion of the latter. One whoſe ſentiments

ments are the refult of a practical knowledge of mankind, will probably fubfcribe to the judgment of the former, and will allow, that in this inftance the CAPTAIN-GENERAL and PROPHET of *Iflamifm* acted the more prudent part.

Shall we then fay, that it was a more *obfcure* theatre on which JESUS CHRIST appeared? Were his fpectators *more ignorant*, or *lefs adverfe?* The contrary of both is manifeft. It may indeed be affirmed with truth, that the religion of the wild Arabs was more repugnant to the doctrine of Mahomet, than the religious dogmas of the Jews were to thofe of Jefus. But we fhall err egregioufly, if we conclude thence, that to this repugnancy the repugnancy of difpofition in the profeffors of thofe religions muft be proportionate. 'Tis a fine obfervation of the moft piercing and comprehenfive genius, which hath appear'd in this age, That " tho' men have

" a very ſtrong tendency to idolatry, they " are nevertheleſs but little attach'd to i- " dolatrous religions; that tho' they have " no great tendency to ſpiritual ideas, they " are nevertheleſs ſtrongly attach'd to re- " ligions which injoin the adoration of a " ſpiritual being *." Hence an attachment in JEWS, CHRISTIANS, and MAHOMETANS, to their reſpective religions, which was never diſplay'd by POLYTHEISTS of any denomination. But its *ſpirituality* was not the only cauſe of adherence which the Jews had to their religion. Every phyſical, every moral motive concurr'd in that people to rivet their attachment, and make them oppoſe with violence, whatever bore the face of innovation. Their religion and polity were ſo blended as ſcarce to be diſtinguiſhable: this engag'd their *patriotiſm*. They were ſelected of God preferably to other na-

* De l'eſprit des loix, liv. 25. chap. 2.

tions:

tions: this inflam'd their *pride* *. They were all under one ſpiritual head, the high-prieſt, and had their ſolemn feſtivals celebrated in one temple: this ſtrengthened their *union*. The ceremonies of their public worſhip were magnificent: this flatter'd their *ſenſes*. Thoſe ceremonies alſo were numerous, and occupied a great part of their time: this, to all the other grounds of attachment, ſuperadded the force of *habit*. On the contrary, the *ſimplicity* of the goſpel, as well as the ſpirit of *humility*, and *moderation*, and *charity*, and *univerſality*, (if I may be allow'd that term) which it breath'd, could not fail to alarm a people of ſuch a caſt, and awaken, as in fact it did, the moſt furious oppoſition. Accordingly, Chriſtianity had fifty times more ſucceſs amongſt idolaters, than it had among the Jews. I am there-

* How great influence this motive had, appears from Acts xxii. 21. 22.

fore

fore warranted to aſſert, that if the miracles of our Lord and his apoſtles had been an impoſture, there could not, on the face of the earth, have been choſen for exhibiting them, a more unfavourable theatre than *Judea*. On the other hand, had it been any where practicable, by a diſplay of falſe wonders, to make converts to a new religion, no where could a project of this nature have been conducted with greater probability of ſucceſs than in *Arabia*. So much for the contraſt there is betwixt the *Chriſtian* MESSIAH and the ORPHAN CHARGE of *Abu Taleb*. So plain it is, that the *moſque* yields entirely the plea of miracles to the *ſynagogue* and the *church*.

BUT from HEATHENS and MAHOMETANS, let us turn our eyes to the CHRISTIAN world. The only object here, which merits our attention, as coming under

under the denomination of miracles aſcrib'd to a new ſyſtem, and as what may be thought to rival in credibility the miracles of the goſpel, are thoſe ſaid to have been perform'd in the *primitive church*, after the times of the apoſtles, and after the finiſhing of the ſacred canon. Theſe will probably be aſcrib'd to a new ſyſtem, ſince Chriſtianity, for ſome centuries, was not (as the phraſe is) *eſtabliſhed*, or (to ſpeak more properly) *corrupted* by human authority; and ſince even after ſuch eſtabliſhment, there remained long in the empire a conſiderable mixture of idolaters. We have the greater reaſon here to conſider this topic, as it hath of late been the ſubject of very warm diſpute, and as the cauſe of Chriſtianity itſelf (which I conceive is totally diſtinct) ſeems to have been ſtrangely confounded with it. From the manner in which the argument hath been conducted, who, I may aſk, would not conclude,

conclude, that both muſt ſtand or fall together? Nothing however can be more groundleſs, nothing more injurious to the religion of Jeſus, than ſuch a concluſion.

The learned writer who hath given riſe to this controverſy, not only acknowledges, that the falſity of the miracles mention'd by the fathers, is no evidence of the falſity of the miracles recorded in ſcripture, but that there is even a preſumption in favour of theſe, ariſing from thoſe forgeries, which he pretends to have detected *. The juſtneſs of the remark contain'd in this acknowledgment, will appear more clearly from the following obſervations.

Let it be obſerved, firſt, that ſuppoſing numbers of people are aſcertain'd of the truth of ſome miracles, whether their conviction ariſe from ſenſe or teſtimony, it

* Dr Middleton's prefatory diſcourſe to his letter from Rome.

will

will ſurely be admitted as a conſequence, that in all ſuch perſons, the preſumption againſt miracles from uncommonneſs muſt be greatly diminiſhed, in ſeveral perhaps totally extinguiſhed.

Let it be obſerved, ſecondly, that if true miracles have been employ'd ſucceſsfully in ſupport of certain religious tenets, this ſucceſs will naturally ſuggeſt to thoſe, who are zealous of propagating favourite opinions in religion, to recur to the plea of miracles, as the moſt effectual expedient for accompliſhing their end. This they will be encouraged to do on a double account: *firſt*, they know, that people from recent experience, are made to expect ſuch a confirmation; *ſecondly*, they know, that in conſequence of this experience, the incredibility, which is the principal obſtruction to ſuch an undertaking, is in a manner remov'd; and there is, on the contrary, as in ſuch circumſtances there certainly would

be, a promptneſs in the generality to receive them.

Add to theſe, that if we conſult the hiſtory of mankind, or even our own experience, we ſhall be convinced, that hardly hath one wonderful event actually happen'd in any country, even where there have not been ſuch viſible temptations to forgery, which hath not given riſe to falſe rumours of other events ſimilar, but ſtill more wonderful. Hardly hath any perſon or people atchiev'd ſome exploits truly extraordinary, to whom common report hath not quickly attributed many others, as extraordinary at leaſt, if not impoſſible. As *fame* may, in this reſpect, be compar'd to a *multiplying glaſs*, reaſonable people almoſt always conclude in the ſame way concerning both; we know that there is not a real object correſponding to every appearance exhibited, at the ſame time we know

know that there must be some objects to give rise to the appearances.

I should therefore only beg of our adversaries, that, for argument's sake, they will suppose that the miracles related in the New Testament were really perform'd; and then, that they will candidly tell us, what, according to their notions of human nature, would, in all likelihood, have been the consequences. They must be very partial to a darling hypothesis, or little acquainted with the world, who will hesitate to own, that, on this supposition, 'tis not barely probable, but certain, that for a few endow'd with the miraculous power, there would soon have arisen numbers of pretenders; that from some miracles well attested, occasion would have been taken to propagate innumerable false reports. If so, with what colour of justice can the detection of many spurious reports among the primitive Christians be

conſider'd as a preſumption againſt thoſe miracles, the reality of which is the moſt plauſible, nay the only plauſible account that can be given of the origin of ſuch reports? The preſumption is too evidently on the oppoſite ſide to need illuſtration.

'Tis not my intention here to patronize either ſide of the queſtion which the Doctor's *Free inquiry* hath occaſioned. All that concerns my argument is, barely to evince, and this I imagine hath been evinced, that, granting the Doctor's plea to be well founded, there is no preſumption ariſing hence, which tends in the loweſt degree to diſcredit the miracles recorded in holy writ; nay, that there is a contrary preſumption. In further confirmation of this truth, let me aſk, Were there ever, in any region of the globe, any ſimilar pretenſions to miraculous powers, before that memorable *era*, the publication of the goſpel? Let me aſk again, Since thoſe pretenſions ceaſed,

ceaſed, hath it ever been in the power of the moſt daring enthuſiaſt, to revive them any where in favour of a new ſyſtem? Authentic miracles will, for a time, give a currency to counterfeits; but as the former become leſs frequent, the latter become more ſuſpected, till at length they are treated with general contempt, and diſappear. The danger then is, leſt men, ever prone to extremes, run to as great a pitch of incredulity, as formerly of credulity. *Lazineſs*, the true ſource of both, always inclines us to admit or reject in the *groſs*, without entering on the irkſome taſk of conſidering things in *detail*. In the firſt inſtance, knowing ſome ſuch events to be true, they *admit all without examination*; in the ſecond, knowing ſome to be falſe, they *reject all without examination*. A procedure this, which, however excuſable in the unthinking herd, is altogether unworthy a philoſopher.

But

But to return: It may be thought, that the claim to miracles in the early ages of the church, continued too long to be ſolely ſupported on the credit of thoſe perform'd by our Lord and his apoſtles. In order to account for this, it ought to be attended to, that in the courſe of ſome centuries, the ſituation of affairs, with regard to religion, was really inverted. Education, and even ſuperſtition, and bigotry, and popularity, which the miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles had to encounter, came gradually to be on the ſide of thoſe wonders, ſaid to have been perform'd in after times. If they were potent *enemies*, and ſuch as, we have reaſon to believe, nothing but the force of truth could vanquiſh; they were alſo potent *allies*, and may well be ſuppos'd able to give a temporary triumph to falſehood, eſpecially when it had few or no enemies to combat. But in diſcourſing on the prodigies

digies ſaid to have been perform'd in primitive times, I have been inſenſibly carried from the point, to which I propos'd in this ſection to confine myſelf. From inquiring into miracles aſcrib'd to new ſyſtems, I have proceeded to thoſe pleaded in confirmation of ſyſtems previouſly eſtabliſh'd, and generally receiv'd.

LEAVING ſo remote a period, I propoſe, laſtly, to inquire, whether, ſince that time, any hereſiarch whatever, any founder of a new ſect, or publiſher of a new ſyſtem, hath pretended to miraculous powers. If the eſſayiſt had known of any ſuch pretender, he ſurely would have mention'd him. But as he hath not afforded us any light on this ſubject, I ſhall juſt recall to the remembrance of my reader, thoſe perſons who, either as innovators or reformers, have made ſome figure in the church. They were the perſons from whom,

whom, if from any, a plea of this kind might naturally have been expected; eſpecially at a time when Europe was either plunged in barbariſm, or but beginning to emerge out of it.

Was ever then this high prerogative, the power of working miracles, claim'd or exercis'd by the founders of the ſects of the Waldenſes and Albigenſes? Did Wickliff in England pretend to it? Did Huſs or Jerom in Bohemia? To come nearer modern times, Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any other of the reformers, advance this plea? Do ſuch of them as are authors, mention in their writings any miracles they perform'd, or appeal to them as the evidences of their doctrine? Do cotemporary hiſtorians alledge, that they challenged the faith of their auditors, in conſequence of ſuch ſupernatural powers? I admit, if they did, that their miracles might

might be aſcrib'd to a new ſyſtem. For tho' they pretended only to re-eſtabliſh the Chriſtian inſtitution, in its native purity, extirpating thoſe pernicious weeds, which falſe philoſophy had introduced into the doctrinal part, and Pagan ſuperſtition into the moral and the ritual; yet as the religion they inculcated, greatly differ'd from the faith and worſhip of the times, it might, in this reſpect, be denominated a new ſyſtem; and would be encounter'd by all the violence and prejudice, which novelties in religion never fail to excite. Not that the want of real miracles was a preſumption againſt the truth of their doctrine. The God of nature, who is the God of Chriſtians, does nothing in vain. No new revelation was pretended to; conſequently there was no occaſion for ſuch ſupernatural ſupport. They appeal'd to the revelation formerly beſtow'd, and by all parties acknowledg'd, as to the proper

rule in this controverſy: they appeal'd to the reaſon of mankind as the judge; and the reaſon of mankind was a competent judge of the conformity of their doctrine to this unerring rule.

But how, upon the author's principles, ſhall we account for this moderation in the reformers? Were they, in his judgment, calm inquirers into truth? Were they diſpaſſionate reaſoners in defence of it? Far otherwiſe. He tells us, "They "may ſafely be pronounced to have been "univerſally inflam'd with the higheſt en-"thuſiaſm *." And doubtleſs we cannot expect from this hand a more amiable picture of their diſciples. May not we then, in our turn, ſafely pronounce, this writer himſelf being judge, that for a man to imagine he ſees what hath no reality, to impoſe in this manner not only on his own underſtanding, but even on his ex-

* Hiſtory of Great Britain, James I. chap. 1.

ternal

ternal ſenſes, is a pitch of deluſion higher than the higheſt enthuſiaſm can produce, and is only to be imputed to downright frenzy *?

Since

* Perhaps it will be pleaded, that the working of miracles was conſider'd by the leaders in the reformation as a Popiſh artifice, and as therefore worthy of being diſcarded with the other abuſes which Popery had introduced. That this was not the light in which miracles were view'd by Luther, who juſtly poſſeſſes the firſt place in the liſt of reformers, is evident from the manner in which he argues againſt Muncer, the apoſtle of the Anabaptiſts. This man, without ordination, had aſſum'd the office of a Chriſtian paſtor. Againſt this conduct Luther remonſtrates, as being, in his judgment, an uſurpation of the ſacred function. "Let him be aſked," ſays he, "Who made "him a teacher of religion? If he anſwers, GOD; let him "prove it by a viſible *miracle*: for 'tis by ſuch ſigns that God "declares himſelf, when he gives an extraordinary miſſion." When this argument was afterward retorted on himſelf by the Romaniſts, who deſir'd to know how his own vocation, originally limited and dependent, had become not only unlimited, but quite independent of the hierarchy, from which he had receiv'd it; his reply was, That the *intrepidity*, with which he had been enabled to brave ſo many dangers, and the *ſucceſs* with which his enterpriſe had been crown'd, ought to be regarded as miracu-

Since the world began, there hath not appear'd a more general propenſion to the wildeſt fanaticiſm, a greater degree of credulity in every claim to the illapſes of the Holy Spirit, or a more thorough contempt of all eſtabliſh'd modes of worſhip, than appear'd in this iſland about the middle of the laſt century. 'Tis aſtoniſhing, that when the minds of men were intoxicated with enthuſiaſm; when every

lous: And indeed moſt of his followers were of this opinion. But whether this opinion was erroneous, or whether the argument againſt Muncer was concluſive, 'tis not my buſineſs to inquire. Thus much is evident from the ſtory: *firſt*, That this reformer, far from rejecting miracles as a Romiſh trick, acknowledged, that in ſome religious queſtions, they are the only medium of proof; *ſecondly*, That notwithſtanding this, he never attempted, by a ſhow of miracles, to impoſe on the ſenſes of his hearers; (if they were deceiv'd in thinking that his ſucceſs and magnanimity were miraculous, 'twas not their ſenſes, but their underſtanding that was deceiv'd) *laſtly*, That the Anabaptiſts themſelves, tho' perhaps the moſt outrageous fanatics that ever exiſted, did not pretend to the power of working miracles. —*Sleidan lib.* 5. *Luth. De votis monaſt.* &c. *Epiſt. ad Frid. Sax. Ducem. ap. Chytræum.*

new

new pretender to divine illuminations was quickly ſurrounded by a crowd of followers, and his moſt incoherent effuſions greedily ſwallow'd as the dictates of the Holy Ghoſt; that in ſuch a Babel of ſectaries, none are to be found, who advanced a claim to the power of working miracles; a claim which, in the author's opinion, tho' falſe, is eaſily ſupported, and wonderfully ſucceſsful, eſpecially among enthuſiaſts. Yet to Mr Hume himſelf, who hath written the hiſtory of that period, and who will not be accus'd of neglecting to mark the extravagancies effected by enthuſiaſm, I appeal for the truth of this remark.

Will it be alledged as an exception, that one or two frantic people among the Quakers, not the leaders of the party, did actually pretend to ſuch a power? Let it be remember'd, that this conduct had no other conſequences, but to bring upon the pretenders ſuch a general contempt, as in that

that fanatical and gloomy age, the moſt unintelligible jargon or glaring nonſenſe would never have been able to produce.

Will it be urged by the eſſayiſt, that even in the beginning of the preſent century, this plea was reviv'd in Britain by the French prophets, a ſet of poor viſionaries, who, by the barbarity with which they had been treated in their own country, had been wrought up to madneſs, before they took refuge in this? I muſt beg leave to remind him, that it is manifeſt, from the hiſtory of thoſe delirious and unhappy creatures, that by no part of their conduct did they ſo effectually open the eyes of mankind naturally credulous, diſcredit their own inſpirations, and ruin their cauſe, as by this, not leſs fooliſh than preſumptuous pretence. Accordingly they are perhaps the only ſect, which hath ſprung up ſo lately, made ſo great a buſtle for a while, and which is neverthe-

leſs

leſs at this day totally extinct. It deſerves alſo to be remarked concerning this people, that tho' they were mad enough to imagine that they could reſtore a dead man to life; nay tho' they proceeded ſo far, as to determine and announce beforehand the day and the hour of his reſurrection; yet none of them were ſo diſtracted, as to imagine, that they had ſeen him riſe; not one of them afterward pretended, that their prediction had been fulfill'd. Thus even a frenzy, which had quite diſorder'd their intellects, could not in this inſtance overpower their ſenſes.

UPON the whole, therefore, till ſome contrary example is produced, I may warrantably conclude, — that the religion of the BIBLE is the only religion extant, which claims to have been founded on the evidence of *miracles*; — that tho', in different ages and countries, numberleſs

enthuſiaſts

enthuſiaſts have ariſen, extremely few have dared to advance this plea;—that whereever any have had the boldneſs to recur to it, it hath prov'd the bane, and not the ſupport, of their cauſe. Thus it hath been evinced, as was propos'd, that there is no preſumption ariſing from the *hiſtory of the world*, which can in the leaſt invalidate the argument from miracles, in defence of Chriſtianity.

SECTION III.

No miracles recorded by hiſtorians of other religions are ſubverſive of the evidence ariſing from the miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity, or can be conſider'd as contrary teſtimony.

'WHY is a miracle regarded as evi-
'dence of a religious doctrine?' Or, 'What connection is there between an
'act

'act of power admitted to be ſupernatural,
'and the truth of a propoſition pronoun-
'ced by the perſon who exerts that power?'
Theſe are queſtions, which ſome of our infidels have exulted in as unanſwerable: and they are queſtions, which 'tis proper to examine a little; not ſo much for their own ſake, as becauſe a ſatisfactory anſwer to them may throw light on the ſubject of this ſection.

A man, I ſuppoſe, of an unblemiſhed character, advanceth doctrines in religion, unknown before, but not in themſelves apparently impious or abſurd. We interrogate him about the manner wherein he attain'd the knowledge of thoſe doctrines. He affirms, That by no proceſs of reaſoning, nor in any other natural way, did he diſcover them; that, on the contrary, they were reveal'd to him by the Spirit of God. It muſt be own'd, there lies a very ſtrong preſumption againſt the truth of what he

ſays; and 'tis of conſequence to inquire, whence that preſumption ariſeth. It is not primarily from any doubt of the man's integrity. If the fact he related, were of an ordinary nature, the reputation he has hitherto maintain'd, would ſecure him from being ſuſpected of an intended deceit. It is not from any abſurdity or immoral tendency we perceive in the doctrine itſelf. It ariſeth principally, if not ſolely, from theſe two circumſtances, the extreme uncommonneſs of ſuch a revelation, and the great facility with which people of ſtrong fancy may, in this particular, impoſe upon themſelves. The man, I ſuppoſe, acquaints us further, that God, when he communicated to him the truths he publiſhes, communicated alſo the power of working miracles, ſuch as, of giving ſight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, of raiſing the dead, and making whole the maimed. 'Tis evident, that we have

preciſely

preciſely the ſame preſumption againſt his being endued with ſuch a power, as againſt his having obtained ſuch a revelation. Two things are aſſerted: there is one preſumption, and but one, againſt them; and it equally lies againſt both. Whatever proves either aſſertion, removes the only preſumption which hinders our belief of the other. The man, I ſuppoſe, laſtly, performs the miracles before us, which he ſaid he was commiſſion'd to perform. We can no longer doubt of a ſupernatural communication. We have now all the evidence which the integrity of the perſon could give us, as to any ordinary event atteſted by him, that the doctrine he delivers as from God, is from God, and therefore true.

Nay, we have more evidence than for any common fact, vouched by a perſon of undoubted probity. As God is both

almighty and all-wiſe, if he hath beſtow'd on any ſo uncommon a privilege, 'tis highly probable, that it is beſtow'd for promoting ſome end uncommonly important. And what more important end than to reveal to men that which may be conducive to their preſent and eternal happineſs? It may be ſaid, That, at moſt, it can only prove the interpoſal of ſome power ſuperior to human: the being who interpoſeth is perhaps a bad being, and intends to deceive us. This, it may be allowed, is *poſſible*; but the other is *probable*. For, *firſt*, From the light of nature, we have no poſitive evidence of the exiſtence of ſuch intermediate beings, good or bad. Their exiſtence is therefore only poſſible. Of the exiſtence and perfections of God, we have the higheſt moral aſſurance. *Secondly*, If there were ſuch beings, that raiſing the dead, and giving ſight to the blind, ſhould come within the verge of

of their power, is alſo but poſſible; that they are within the ſphere of omnipotence is certain. *Thirdly*, Whatever ſeems to imply a ſuſpenſion of any of the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, we may preſume, with great appearance of reaſon, proceeds from the author of nature, either *immediately*, or, which amounts to the ſame thing, *mediately*; that is, by the intervention of ſome agent impower'd by him. To all theſe there will alſo accrue preſumptions, not only, as was hinted already, from the character of the preacher, but from the apparent tendency of the doctrine, and from the effect it produceth on thoſe who receive it. The connection now between the miracle and the doctrine is obvious. The miracle removes the improbability of a ſupernatural communication, of which communication it is in fact an irrefragable evidence. This improbability, which was the only obſtacle, being removed, the doctrine

trine hath, at leaſt, all the evidence of a common fact, atteſted by a man of known virtue and good ſenſe.

In order to illuſtrate this further, I ſhall recur to the inſtance I have already had occaſion to conſider, of the Dutchman and the King of Siam. I ſhall ſuppoſe, that, beſides the account given by the former of the freezing of water in Holland, he had inform'd the prince of the aſtoniſhing effects produced by gunpowder, with which the latter had been entirely unacquainted. Both accounts appear to him alike incredible, or, if you pleaſe, abſolutely impoſſible. Some time afterward, the Dutchman gets imported into the kingdom a ſufficient quantity of gunpowder, with the neceſſary artillery. He informs the monarch of this acquiſition; who having permitted him to make experiments on ſome of his cattle and buildings, perceives, with inexpreſſible amazement,

ment, that all the European had told him, of the celerity and violence with which this deſtructive powder operates, is ſtrictly conformable to truth. I aſk any conſiderate perſon, Would not this be enough to reſtore the ſtranger to the Indian's good opinion, which, I ſuppoſe, his former experienced honeſty had intitled him to? Would it not remove the incredibility of the account he had given of the freezing of water in northern countries? Yet, if abſtractly conſider'd, what connection is there between the effects of gunpowder and the effects of cold? But the preſumption ariſing from miracles, in favour of the doctrine publiſhed by the performer, as divinely inſpired, muſt be incomparably ſtronger; ſince from what hath been ſaid, it appears to have ſeveral peculiar circumſtances, which add weight to it. 'Tis evident, then, that miracles are a proper proof, and perhaps the only proper

proper proof, of a revelation from Heaven. But 'tis alſo evident, that miracles may be wrought for other purpoſes, and may not be intended as proofs of any doctrine whatſoever.

THUS much being premiſed, I ſhall examine another very curious argument of the eſſayiſt: "There is no teſtimony," ſays he, "for any prodigy, that is not op-"pos'd by an infinite number of witneſ-"ſes; ſo that not only the miracle de-"ſtroys the credit of the teſtimony, but "even the teſtimony deſtroys itſelf *." In order to illuſtrate this ſtrange poſition, he obſerves, that, "in matters of religion, "whatever is different is contrary; and "that it is impoſſible the religions of an-"cient Rome, of Turky, of Siam, and of "China, ſhould all of them be eſtabliſh-"ed on any ſolid foundation. Every mi-

* p. 190. &c.

"racle

" racle therefore pretended to have been " wrought in any of theſe religions, (and " all of them abound in miracles) as its " direct ſcope is to eſtabliſh the particular " ſyſtem to which it is attributed, ſo it " has the ſame force, tho' more indirectly, " to overthrow every other ſyſtem. In " deſtroying a rival ſyſtem, it likewiſe de- " ſtroys the credit of thoſe miracles, on " which that ſyſtem was eſtabliſhed; ſo " that all the prodigies of different reli- " gions are to be regarded as contrary " facts, and the evidences of theſe prodi- " gies, whether weak or ſtrong, as oppo- " ſite to each other." Never did an author more artfully avail himſelf of indefinite expreſſions. With what admirable ſleight does he vary his phraſes, ſo as to make the inadvertent reader look upon them as ſynonymous, when in fact their ſignifications are totally diſtinct? Thus what, by a moſt extraordinary idiom, is

called at firſt, ‘ miracles wrought in a re-
‘ ligion,’ we are next to regard, as ‘ mi-
‘ racles attributed to a particular ſyſtem,’
and laſtly, as ‘ miracles, the direct ſcope
‘ of which is to eſtabliſh that ſyſtem.’ E-
very body, I will venture to ſay, in be-
ginning to read the ſentence, if he forms
any notion of what the author means by
a ‘ miracle wrought in a religion,’ under-
ſtands it barely as a ‘ miracle wrought a-
‘ mong thoſe who profeſs a particular re-
‘ ligion,’ the words appearing to be us'd
in the ſame latitude, as when we call the
traditional tales current among the Jews,
tho' they ſhould have no relation to reli-
gion, Jewiſh tales; and thoſe in like man-
ner Mahometan or Pagan tales, which are
current among Mahometans or Pagans.
Such a miracle, the reader, ere he is a-
ware, is brought to conſider as a miracle
attributed to a particular ſyſtem; nay fur-
ther, as ‘ a miracle, the direct ſcope of
‘ which

'which is to eſtabliſh that ſyſtem.' Yet nothing can be conceiv'd more different than the meaning of thoſe expreſſions, which are here jumbled together as equivalent.

'Tis plain, that all the miracles of which there is any record, come under the firſt denomination. They are all ſuppos'd to have been wrought before men, or among men; and where-ever there are men, there is religion of ſome kind or other. Perhaps too all may, in a very *improper* ſenſe, be attributed to a religious ſyſtem. They all imply an interruption of the ordinary courſe of nature. Such an interruption, where-ever it is obſerved, will be aſcrib'd to the agency of thoſe divinities that are ador'd by the obſervers, and ſo may be ſaid to be attributed by them to their own ſyſtem. But where are the miracles (thoſe of holy writ excepted) of which you can ſay with propriety, it is their direct

ſcope to eſtabliſh a particular ſyſtem? Muſt we not then be ſtrangely blinded by the charm of a few ambiguous terms, if we are made to confound things ſo widely different? Yet this confuſion is the very baſis, on which the author founds his reaſoning, and rears this tremendous concluſion; That 'a miracle of Mahomet, or any 'of his ſucceſſors,' and, by parity of reaſon, a miracle of Chriſt, or any of his apoſtles, 'is refuted (as if it had been men-'tioned, and had, in expreſs terms, been 'contradicted) by the teſtimony of Titus 'Livius, Plutarch, Tacitus, and of all the 'authors, Chineſe, Grecian, and Roman 'Catholic, who have related any miracles 'in their particular religions.' Here all the miracles, that have been related by men of different religions, are blended, as coming under the common denomination of miracles, the direct ſcope of which was to eſtabliſh thoſe particular religious ſyſtems; an

insinuation, in which there is not even the shadow of truth.

That we may be satisfied on this point, let the following observations concerning the miracles of profane history be attended to. *First*, Many facts are related as miraculous, where we may admit the fact, without acknowledging the miracle. Instances of this kind we have in relations concerning comets, eclipses, meteors, earthquakes, and suchlike. *Secondly*, The miracles may be admitted as genuine, and the manner in which historians account for them, rejected as absurd. The one is a matter of testimony, the other of conjecture. In this a man is influenced by education, by prejudices, by received opinions. In every country, as was observ'd already, men will recur to the theology of the place, for the solution of every phenomenon suppos'd miraculous. But, that it was the scope of the miracle to support the

the theology, is one thing; and that fanciful men thought they diſcover'd in the theology the cauſes of the miracle, is another. The inhabitants of Lyſtra accounted, from the principles of their own religion, for the miracle perform'd in their city by Paul and Barnabas *. Was it therefore the ſcope of that miracle to ſupport the Lycaonian religion? *Thirdly*, Many miracles are recorded, as produced directly by Heaven, without the miniſtration of men: by what conſtruction are theſe diſcover'd to be proofs of a particular ſyſtem? Yet theſe alſo, where-ever they happen, will be accounted for by the natives of the country, from the principles of their own ſuperſtition. Had any of the Pagan citizens eſcap'd the ruin in which Sodom was miraculouſly involved, they would doubtleſs have ſought for the cauſe of this deſtruction in the eſtabliſhed

* Acts xiv. 8. &c.

mode

mode of polytheiſm, and would probably have imputed it to the vengeance of ſome of their deities, incurr'd perhaps by the neglect of ſome very frivolous ceremony. Would it therefore have been the ſcope of the miracle to confirm this nonſenſe? *Fourthly*, Even miracles ſaid to have been perform'd by a man, are no evidences of the truth of that man's opinions; ſuch, I mean, as he pretends not to have receiv'd by revelation, but by the exerciſe of reaſon, by education, or by information from other men; no more than a man's being endow'd with bodily ſtrength greater than ordinary, would prove him to be ſuperior to others in his mental faculties. I conclude with declaring, that if inſtances ſhall be produced, of miracles wrought by men of probity, in proof of doctrines which they affirm to have been reveal'd to them from Heaven, and which are repugnant to the doctrine of the Bible, then I ſhall think

think it equitable to admit, that religious miracles contradict one another. Then will reaſonable people be reduced to the dilemma, either of diſproving the allegations on one ſide, or of acknowledging that miracles can be no evidence of revelation. No attempt however hath as yet been made by any writer to produce an inſtance of this kind.

'But will nothing leſs ſatisfy?' replies the author. 'Will not the predictions of 'augurs and oracles, and the intimations 'ſaid to have been given by the gods or 'ſaints in dreams and viſions, of things 'not otherwiſe knowable by thoſe to 'whom they were thus intimated; will 'not theſe, and ſuchlike prodigies, ſerve 'in ſome degree as evidence?' As evidence of what? Not of any religious principles convey'd at the ſame time by revelation; 'tis not pretended, that there were any ſuch: but as evidence of principles, which

which had been long before entertain'd, and which were originally imbib'd from education, and from education only. That the evidence here, ſuppoſing the truth of the facts, is at beſt but very indirect, and by no means on the ſame footing with that of the miracles recorded in the goſpel, might be eaſily evinced, if there were occaſion. But there is in reality no occaſion, ſince there is no ſuch evidence of the facts as can juſtly intitle them to our notice. Let it be remember'd, that, in the fourth ſection of the firſt part, it was ſhown, that there is the greateſt diſparity, in reſpect of evidence, betwixt miracles perform'd in proof of a religion *to be* eſtabliſhed, and in *contradiction* to opinions generally receiv'd; and miracles perform'd, on the contrary, in ſupport of a religion *already* eſtabliſhed, and in *confirmation* of opinions generally receiv'd; that, in the former caſe, there is the ſtrongeſt pre-

ſumption *for* the miracles, in the latter *againſt* them. Let it alſo be remember'd, that in the preceding ſection it was ſhown, that the religion of the Bible is the only religion extant, which claims to have been founded on the evidence of miracles; that this prerogative neither the Pagan religion, the Mahometan, nor the Roman-Catholic, can, with any appearance of reaſon, arrogate; and that, by conſequence, there is one of the ſtrongeſt preſumptions poſſible *for* the miracles of the goſpel, which is not only wanting in the miracles of other religions, but which is contraſted by the ſtrongeſt preſumption poſſible *againſt* theſe miracles. And tho' this preſumption ſhould not, in all caſes, be accounted abſolutely inſuperable, we muſt at leaſt ſay, it gives an immenſe ſuperiority to the proofs of Chriſtianity. 'Twere an endleſs and a fruitleſs taſk, to canvaſs particularly the evidence of all the pretended miracles either

ther of Paganism or Popery, (for on this head Mahometism is much more modest) but as the author hath selected some, which he considers as the best attested, of both religions, these shall be examin'd severally in the two subsequent sections. From this examination a tolerable judgment may be form'd concerning the pretensions of these two species of superstition.

But from what hath been already said, it is evident, that the contrariety which the author pretends to have discover'd in the miracles said to have been wrought, as he expresseth it, in different religions, vanishes entirely on a close inspection, especially when compar'd with the miracles of the gospel; the transcendent lustre of which they are by no means fitted to endure. He is even sensible of this himself; and, as is customary with orators, the more inconclusive his reasons are, so much the more positive are his assertions. "This

" argument," ſays he, " may appear over " ſubtile and refin'd;" indeed ſo ſubtile and refin'd, that it is inviſible altogether; " *but* —— is not *in reality* different from " the reaſoning of a judge, who ſuppoſes " that the credit of two witneſſes main- " taining a crime againſt any one, is de- " ſtroy'd by the teſtimony of two others, " who affirm him to have been two hun- " dred leagues diſtant, at the ſame inſtant " when the crime is ſaid to have been " committed." After the particle *but*, with which this clauſe begins, the reader naturally expects ſuch an explication of the argument, as will convince him, that tho' *ſubtile* and *refin'd*, it hath *ſolidity* and *ſtrength*. Inſtead of this, he hath only the author's *word* warranting it to be good to all intents: " But *is not in reality* dif- " ferent," *&c.* The analogy between his *example* and his *argument* ſeems to be but very diſtant; I ſhall therefore, without a-

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ny comment, leave it with the reader as I find it.

THUS it appears, that, for aught the author hath as yet prov'd, no miracles recorded by hiſtorians of other religions are ſubverſive of the evidence ariſing from the miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity, or can juſtly be conſidered as contrary teſtimony.

SECTION IV.

Examination of the PAGAN *miracles mentioned by Mr Hume.*

SHOULD one read attentively the *Eſſay on miracles*, and conſider it ſolely as a philoſophical diſquiſition on an abſtract queſtion, like moſt of the other pieces in the ſame collection; he could not fail to wonder, what had induced the author ſo ſuddenly

ſuddenly to change ſides in the debate, and, by doing ſo, to contradict himſelf in terms the moſt expreſs. Does he not, in the latter part of that performance, as warmly contend for the *reality* of ſome miracles, as he had pleaded in the former part, for the *impoſſibility* of all? 'Tis true, he generally concludes concerning thoſe, that they are 'groſs and palpable falſe-'hoods.' But this ſerves only to render his conduct the more myſterious, as that concluſion is always preceded by an attempt to evince, that we have the greateſt reaſon to receive them as 'certain and in-'fallible truths.' Nay, ſo entirely doth his *zeal* make him forget even his moſt poſitive aſſertions, (and what inconſiſtencies may not be dreaded from an exceſs of *zeal!*) that he ſhows minutely, we have thoſe very evidences for the miracles he is pleas'd to patronize, which, he had ſtre-

nuouſly

nuously argued, were not to be found in support of any miracles whatever.

" There is not to be found," he affirms *, " in all history, a miracle attest-
" ed by a sufficient number of men, of
" such unquestion'd good sense, educa-
" tion, and learning, as to secure us a-
" gainst all delusion in themselves; of
" such undoubted integrity, as to place
" them beyond all suspicion of any design
" to deceive others; of such credit and re-
" putation in the eyes of mankind, as to
" have a great deal to lose, in case of be-
" ing detected in any falsehood; and at
" the same time attesting facts perform'd
" in such a public manner, and in so cele-
" brated a part of the world, as to render
" the detection unavoidable." We need only turn over a few pages of the *Essay*, and we shall find the author taking great pains to convince us, that all these cir-

* p. 183.

cumstances

cumſtances concurr'd in ſupport of certain miracles, which, notwithſtanding his *general reſolution*, he has thought fit to honour with a very particular attention.

He has not indeed told us *how many* witneſſes, in his way of reckoning, will conſtitute 'a ſufficient number;' but for ſome miracles which he relates, he gives us *clouds* of witneſſes, one cloud ſucceeding another: for the Moliniſts, who tried to diſcredit them, "ſoon found themſelves "overwhelm'd by a cloud of *new* witneſ- "ſes, one hundred and twenty in num- "ber *." As to the character of the witneſſes, "moſt of them were perſons of cre- "dit and ſubſtance in Paris †;" again, thoſe miracles "were atteſted by witneſſes "of credit and diſtinction, before judges "of unqueſtion'd integrity ‡;" and, "they "were prov'd by witneſſes, before the of- "ficialty or biſhop's court of Paris, under

* p. 197. in the note. † ib. ‡ p. 195.

"the

" the eyes of Cardinal Noailles, whose " character for integrity and capacity was " never contested even by his enemies *;" again, " the secular clergy of France, par- " ticularly the rectors or *curés* of Paris, " give testimony to these impostures, than " whom no clergy are more celebrated for " strictness of life and manners †." Once more, one principal witness, " *Monsieur de* " Montgeron, was counsellor or judge of " the parliament of Paris, a man of figure " and character ‡;" another " no less a " man than the *Duc de* Chatillon, a Duke " and Peer of France, of the highest rank " and family ||." 'Tis strange, if *credit*, and *substance*, and *distinction*, and *capacity*, are not sufficient securities to us, that the witnesses were not 'themselves deluded;' 'tis strange, if *uncontested integrity*, and *eminent strictness* of life and manners, can-

* p. 196. in the note.
† p. 199. in the note.
‡ p. 195. in the note.
|| p. 199. in the note.

not remove ‘ all ſuſpicion of any deſign in ‘ them to deceive others;’ ’tis ſtrange, if one who was *counſellor* of the parliament of Paris, a man of figure and character, and if another who was a *Duke* and Peer of France, of the higheſt rank and family, had not ‘ a great deal to loſe, in caſe of be- ‘ ing detected in any falſehood:’ nay, and if all thoſe witneſſes of *credit* and *diſtinction*, ‘ had not alſo a great deal to loſe;’ “ ſince the Jeſuits, a learned body, ſup- “ ported by the civil magiſtrate, were de- “ termin’d enemies to thoſe opinions, in “ whoſe favour the miracles were ſaid “ to have been wrought *;” and ſince “ *Monſieur* Herault, the lieutenant *de po-* “ *lice*, of whoſe great reputation, all who “ have been in France about that time, “ have heard; and whoſe vigilance, pene- “ tration, activity, and extenſive intelli- “ gence, have been much talk’d of; ſince

* p. 195.

“ this

" this magiſtrate, who by the nature of " his office is almoſt abſolute, was inveſt- " ed with full powers on purpoſe to ſup- " preſs theſe miracles, and frequently ſei- " zed and examin'd the witneſſes and ſub- " jects of them; though he could never " reach any thing ſatisfactory againſt " them *." As to the only remaining cir- cumſtance, their being ' perform'd in a ' public manner, and in a celebrated part ' of the world,' this concurred alſo. They were perform'd, we are told, " in a learn- " ed age, and on the moſt eminent theatre " that is now in the world †:" beſides, " twenty-two rectors or *curés* of Paris, " with infinite earneſtneſs, preſſed the " Archbiſhop, an enemy to the Janſeniſts, " to examine thoſe miracles, which they " aſſert to be known to the whole world, " and indiſputably certain ‡."

* p. 197. in the note. † p. 195.

‡ p. 196. in the note.

Thus the eſſayiſt hath laid us under the diſagreeable neceſſity of inferring, that he is either very raſh in his general aſſertions, or uſeth very great amplification in his particular narrations. Perhaps in both inferences, we ſhall find, upon inquiry, that there is ſome truth. In his *Hiſtory of Great Britain*, he gives us notice *, that he addreſſed himſelf " to a more diſtant " poſterity, than will ever be reach'd by " any local or temporary theology." Why did he not likewiſe, in writing the *Eſſays*, entertain this grand idea? It would have been of uſe to him. It would have prevented his falling into thoſe inconſiſtencies, which his too great attention and antipathy to what he calls a *local or temporary theology*, only could occaſion; and which, when that theology, according to his hypotheſis, ſhall be extinct, and when all our religious controverſies ſhall be forgot-

* James I. chap. 2.

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ten, muſt appear unaccountable and ridiculous. People will not then have the means of diſcovering, what is ſo obvious to us his cotemporaries, that he only aſſumes the appearance of an advocate for ſome miracles, which are diſbeliev'd by the generality of Proteſtants, his countrymen, in order, by the compariſon, to vilify the miracles of ſacred writ, which are acknowledged by them.

BUT to deſcend to particulars, I ſhall begin with conſidering thoſe miracles, for which the author is indebted to the ancient Pagans. Firſt, in order to convince us, how eaſy a matter it is for cunning and impudence to impoſe by falſe mirales on the credulity of barbarians, he introduces the ſtory of Alexander of Pontus *. The juſtneſs of the account he gives of this impoſtor from Lucian, I ſhall not diſpute.

* p. 188. &c.

But

But that it may appear, how little the Chriſtian religion is affected by this relation, notwithſtanding ſome inſinuations he hath intermixt with it, I ſhall make the following remarks.

It is of importance to know, what was the profeſſion of this once ſo famous, tho' now forgotten Paphlagonian. Was he a publiſher of ſtrange gods? No *. Was he the founder of a new ſyſtem in religion? No. What was he then? He was no other than a profeſſed fortune-teller. What

* The learned and judicious author of the *Obſervations on the converſion and apoſtleſhip of Saint Paul*, hath inadvertently ſaid of Alexander, that he introduced a *new god* into Pontus. The truth is, he only exhibited a reproduction of *Eſculapius*, a well-known deity in thoſe parts, to whom he gave indeed the *new name* GLYCON. In this there was nothing unſuitable to the genius of the mythology. Accordingly, we do not find, that either the prieſts, or the people, were in the leaſt alarm'd for the religion of the country, or ever charged Alexander as an *innovator* in religious matters. On the contrary, the greateſt enemies he had to encounter, were not the religioniſts, but the latitudinarians.

were

were the arts by which he carried on this gainful trade? The eſſayiſt juſtly remarks, that 'it was a wiſe policy in him, to lay 'the firſt ſcene of his impoſtures in a coun-'try, where the people were extremely igno-'rant and ſtupid, and ready to ſwallow the 'groſſeſt deluſion.' For, "had Alexander "fix'd his reſidence at Athens, the philo-"ſophers of that renown'd mart of learn-"ing, had immediately ſpread thro' the "whole Roman empire their ſenſe of the "matter; which, being ſupported by ſo "great authority, and diſplay'd by all the "force of reaſon and eloquence, had en-"tirely open'd the eyes of mankind." I ſhall beg leave to remark another inſtance of good policy in him. He attempted not to gain the veneration of the multitude by oppoſing, but by adopting their religious prejudices. His whole plan of deceit was founded in the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition. The author himſelf will acknowledge, it would

would have been extreme folly in him to have acted otherwiſe: and all the world, I believe, will agree in thinking, that, in that caſe, he could not have had the ſmalleſt probability of ſucceſs. What were the miracles he wrought? I know of none, unleſs we will dignify with that name, ſome feats of legerdemain, perform'd moſtly by candle-light; which, in many parts of Europe, we may daily ſee equall'd, nay far exceeded, by thoſe of modern jugglers. Add to theſe ſome oracles he pronounced, concerning which, if we may form a judgment from the account and ſpecimen given us by Lucian, we ſhould conclude, that, like moſt other Heathen oracles, they were unintelligible, or equivocal, or falſe. Before whom did he exhibit his wonders? Before none, if he could help it, that were not thorough believers in the popular ſyſtem. His nocturnal myſteries were always introduced with an AVAUNT to *Atheiſts*,

theists, *Christians*, and *Epicureans:* and indeed it was dangerous for any such to be present at them. The author says, that, " from his ignorant Paphlagonians, he " was enabled to proceed to the inlisting " of votaries among the Grecian philoso- " phers." On what authority he advances this, I have not been able to discover. He adds, " and men of the most eminent " rank and distinction in Rome." Lucian mentions one man of rank, Rutilianus, among the votaries of the prophet; an honest man he calls him, but at the same time the weakest, the most superstitious that ever liv'd. As to the military expedition, which one would imagine from Mr Hume's expression, the Emperor had resolved on, in consequence of the encouragement which the delusive prophecies of this impostor gave him, we find, on the contrary, it was undertaken, before those prophecies were uttered. But further,

Did Alexander risk any thing in assuming the character of the *interpreter* of ESCULAPIUS? Did he lose, or did he suffer any thing in defence of it? Quite the reverse. He inriched himself by this most ingenious occupation. I shall say nothing of the picture which Lucian gives of his morals, of the many artifices which he used, or of the atrocious crimes which he perpetrated. It must be own'd, that the principal scope for calumny and detraction is in what concerns the private life and moral character. Lucian was an enemy, and, by his own account, had received the highest provocation. But I avoid every thing, on this topic, that can admit a question.

Where, I would gladly know, lies the resemblance between this impostor and the first publishers of the gospel? Every one, on the most superficial review, may discover, that, in all the material circumstances, they are perfect contrasts. There appears

not

not therefore to be great danger in the remark which the author hath affix'd to this relation, as the ſting: "Tho' *much to be* "*wiſh'd*, it does not always happen, that "every *Alexander* meets with a *Lucian*, "ready to expoſe and detect his impo- "ſtures." Leſt the full import of this emphatical clauſe ſhould not be apprehended, the author hath been ſtill more explicit in the note: "It may here perhaps be ob- "jected, that I proceed raſhly, and form "my notions of Alexander, merely from "the account given of him by Lucian, a "profeſs'd enemy. *It were indeed to be* "*wiſh'd*, that ſome of the accounts pu- "bliſhed by his followers and accompli- "ces had remain'd. The oppoſition and "contraſt betwixt the character and con- "duct of the ſame man, as drawn by a "friend or an enemy, is as ſtrong, even "in common life, much more in theſe "religious matters, as that betwixt any

" two men in the world, betwixt Alexan-
" der and Saint Paul for inſtance." Who can forbear to lament the uncommon diſtreſs of an author, oblig'd every moment to recur to unavailing wiſhes? Mr Hume, however, in this calamitous ſituation, ſolaceth himſelf, as well as he can, by ſuppoſing what he cannot aſſert. He ſuppoſeth what would have been the caſe, if his wiſhes could have been gratified; and artfully inſinuates, in this manner, to his readers, that if we had the character and conduct of the apoſtle, delineated by as able an enemy as Lucian, we ſhould find the picture as ugly as that of Alexander.

Let us then for once ſuppoſe, with the author, that ſuch an enemy had undertaken the hiſtory of Paul of Tarſus. I can eaſily conceive what a different repreſentation we ſhould, in that caſe, have had, of the mental endowments and moral diſpoſition, as well as of the inducements and views

views of this Chriſtian miſſionary. I can conceive alſo, that both his actions and diſcourſes might have been ſtrangely disfigured. But if the biographer had maintain'd any regard, I ſay not, to truth, but to probability; there are ſome things, we may be abſolutely certain, he would never have advanced. He would not ſurely have ſaid of Paul, that he was by profeſſion a cunning man, or *conjurer*; one who, for a piece of money, either told people their fortunes, or taught them how to recover ſtolen goods. He would not, I ſuppoſe, have pretended, that where-ever the apoſtle went, he, in order to gain the populace, *flatter'd* their ſuperſtition, and founded all his pretenſions on the popular ſyſtem. He would not have alledged, that Paul *inriched* himſelf, or that he could ever have the proſpect of inriching himſelf, by his vocation; nay, or that he riſked nothing, or ſuffer'd nothing, by it. He could

could not have ſaid concerning him, that he *declin'd* the audience or ſcrutiny of men, whoſe opinions in religion differ'd from thoſe on which his miſſion was founded. He durſt not have imputed to him the *wiſe policy* of laying the ſcene of his impoſtures, only where ignorance, barbariſm, and ſtupidity prevail'd: as it is unqueſtionable, that our apoſtle traverſed great part, not only of Aſia Minor, but of Macedonia, and Achaia; fixed his reſidence eighteen months at Corinth, a city not leſs celebrated for the polite arts, than for its populouſneſs and riches; preached publicly at Athens, before the Stoics and the Epicureans, and even before the Areopagus, the moſt venerable judicature in Greece; not afraid of what the philoſophers of that renowned mart of learning, might ſpread through the whole Roman empire, concerning him and his doctrine; nay,

nay, and laſtly preached at Rome itſelf, the miſtreſs and metropolis of the world.

The reader will obſerve, that, in this compariſon, I have ſhunned every thing that is of a private, and therefore of a dubious nature. The whole is founded on ſuch actions and events as were notorious; which 'tis not in the power of cotemporary hiſtorians to falſify; ſuch with regard to Alexander, as a *votary* could not have diſſembled; ſuch with regard to Paul, as an *enemy* durſt not have denied. We are truly indebted to the eſſayiſt, who intending to exhibit a *rival* to the apoſtle, hath provided him with a *foil*. Truth never ſhines with greater luſtre, than when confronted with falſehood. The evidence of our religion, how ſtrong ſoever, appears not ſo irreſiſtible, conſider'd by itſelf, as when by compariſon we perceive, that none of thoſe artifices and circumſtances attended its propagation, which the whole

courſe

courſe of experience ſhows to be neceſſary to render impoſture ſucceſsful.

THE next topic on which the ingenious author hath beſtow'd ſome flouriſhes, is the miracle " which Tacitus reports of " Veſpaſian, who cured a blind man in " Alexandria, by means of his ſpittle, and " a lame man by the mere touch of his " foot, in obedience to a viſion of the god " Serapis, who had enjoin'd them to have " recourſe to the emperor, for theſe mira- " culous and extraordinary cures *." The ſtory he introduces with informing us, that it is " one of the beſt atteſted miracles " in all profane hiſtory." If ſo, it will the better ſerve for a ſample of what may be expected from that quarter. " Every " circumſtance," he tells us, " ſeems to " add weight to the teſtimony, and might " be diſplayed at large, with all the force

* p. 192.

" of

" of argument and eloquence, if any one " were now concern'd to enforce the evi- " dence of that exploded and idolatrous " ſuperſtition." For my part, were I concern'd to enforce the evidence of that exploded and idolatrous ſuperſtition, I ſhould not wiſh the ſtory were in better hands than in the author's. He is by no means deficient in eloquence; and if ſometimes there appear a deficiency in argument, that is not imputable to him, but to the ſubject, which cannot furniſh him with any better: and tho' I do not ſuſpect him to be in the leaſt concern'd to re-eſtabliſh Paganiſm, yet 'tis well known, that hatred to an adverſary may as ſtrongly animate an advocate to exert himſelf, as affection to a client.

But to proceed to the ſtory: Firſt, the author pleads " the gravity, ſolidity, age, " and probity of ſo great an emperor, " who, thro' the whole courſe of his life,

" convers'd in a familiar way with his " friends and courtiers, and never affect- " ed thoſe extraordinary airs of divinity " aſſum'd by Alexander and Demetrius." To this character, the juſtneſs of which I intend not to controvert, I ſhall beg leave to add, what is equally indubitable, and much to the purpoſe, that no emperor ſhow'd a ſtronger inclination to corroborate his title by the ſanction of the gods, than the prince of whom he is ſpeaking. This, doubtleſs, he thought the more neceſſary in his caſe, as he was of an obſcure family, and no way related to any of his predeceſſors in the empire. How fond he was of pleading *viſions*, and *preſages*, and *auguries*, in his favour, all the world knows *.

The author adds, " The hiſtorian, a " contemporary writer, noted for candour

* Auctoritas, et quaſi majeſtas quædam, ut ſcilicet inopinato et adhuc novo principi deerat, hæc quoque acceſſit. SUETON.

" and

" and veracity, and withal the greateſt " and moſt penetrating genius perhaps of " all antiquity, and ſo free from any ten- " dency to ſuperſtition and credulity, that " he even lies under the contrary imputa- " tion of atheiſm and profaneneſs." This would ſay a great deal, if the character of the hiſtorian were of any moment in the queſtion. Doth Tacitus pretend that he was himſelf a witneſs of the miracle? No. Doth he mention it as a thing which he believes? No. In either caſe I acknowledge, that the reputation of the *relater* for candour and penetration, muſt have added weight to the relation, whether conſider'd as his *teſtimony*, or barely as his *opinion*. But is it fair to plead the veracity of the writer in proof of every popular rumour mention'd by him? His veracity is only concern'd to ſatisfy us, that it was actually reported, as he relates; or that the attempt was made, and the miracle

pretended; a point which, I presume, nobody would have disputed, altho' the authority had been less than that of Tacitus. Indeed the historian doth not say directly, whether he believes the miracle or not; but by his manner of telling it, he plainly insinuates, that he thought it ridiculous. In introducing it, he intimates the utility of such reports to the Emperor's cause. "By which," says he, "the favour of "Heaven, and the appointment of the "gods, might be urg'd in support of his "title *." When he names the god *Serapis*, as warning the blind man to recur to Vespasian, he adds, in evident contempt and derision of his godship, "Who is a-"dor'd above all others by the *Egyptians*, "a people immers'd in superstition †." Again he speaks of the Emperor, as indu-

* Queis cœlestis favor, et quædam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur.

† Quem dedita superstitionibus gens ante alios colit.

ced

ced to hope for ſucceſs, by the perſuaſive tongues of his flatterers *. A ſerious believer of the miracle would hardly have uſed ſuch a ſtyle in relating it. But to what purpoſe did he then relate it? The anſwer is eaſy. Nothing could be more characteriſtic of the *Emperor*, or could better ſhow the arts he had recourſe to, and the hold which flattery had of him; nothing could be more characteriſtic of the *Alexandrians*, the people amongſt whom the miracle is ſaid to have been wrought.

" The perſons," ſays the eſſayiſt, " from " whoſe teſtimony he related the miracle, " of eſtabliſhed character for judgment " and veracity, *as we may well ſuppoſe*; " eye-witneſſes of the fact, and confirm- " ing their verdict, after the Flavian fa- " mily were deſpoil'd of the empire, and " could no longer give any reward as the " price of a lie." Perſons of *eſtabliſhed*

* Vocibus adulantium in ſpem induci.

character

character for judgment and veracity! Who told Mr Hume ſo? 'Twas not Tacitus. He only denominates them in general *: "They who were preſent," and "a croud "of byſtanders." The author, conſcious that he advances this without even the ſhadow of authority, hath ſubjoined, in order to palliate the matter, *as we may well ſuppoſe*. An admirable expedient for ſupplying a weak plea, with thoſe convenient circumſtances that can give it weight! When fact fails, which is not ſeldom the caſe, we need but apply to ſuppoſition, whoſe help is always near. But if this be allowed to take the place of argument, I ſee no reaſon why I may not avail myſelf of the privilege of ſuppoſing, as well as the author. The witneſſes then, I will ſuppoſe, were moſtly an ignorant rabble: but I wrong my cauſe; I have a better foundation than ſuppoſal, having

* Qui interfuere.—— Quæ aſtabat multitudo.

Tacitus

Tacitus himſelf, and all antiquity on my ſide, when I add, groſsly addicted to *ſuperſtition*, particularly attach'd to the worſhip of *Serapis*, and keenly engaged in ſupport of *Veſpaſian*, ALEXANDRIA having been the firſt city of note that publicly declared for him. Was it then matter of ſurpriſe, that a ſtory, which at once ſooth'd the ſuperſtition of the populace, and favour'd their political ſchemes, ſhould gain ground among them? Can we juſtly wonder, that the wiſer few, who were not deceiv'd, ſhould connive at, or even contribute to promote a deceit, which was highly uſeful to the cauſe wherein themſelves were imbarked, and at the ſame time highly grateful to the many? Laſtly, can we be ſurpriſed that any, who, for ſeven and twenty years, had, from motives of intereſt, and ambition, and popularity, propagated a falſehood, ſhould

ſhould not afterward be willing to expoſe themſelves as liars?

The author finiſhes the ſtory thus: "To "which if we add the public nature of "the facts related, it will appear, that no "evidence can well be ſuppos'd ſtronger "for ſo groſs and ſo palpable a falſe-"hood." As to the nature of the facts, we are told by Tacitus, that when Veſpaſian conſulted the phyſicians, whether ſuch maladies were curable by human art, they declared *, that "in the one the power of "ſight was not extinct, but would return, "were the obſtacles removed; that in the "other, the joints had ſuffer'd ſome diſlo-"cation, which by a ſalutary preſſure "might be redreſſed." From this account we are naturally led to conclude, that the diſorders were not ſo conſpicuous,

* Huic non exeſam vim luminis, et redituram, ſi pellerentur obſtantia: illi elapſos in pravum artus, ſi ſalubris vis adhibeatur, poſſe integrari.

but

but that either they might have been feigned, where they were not; or that cures might have been pretended, where none were perform'd. I think it is even a further presumption of the truth of this conclusion, that Suetonius, the only other Roman historian who mentions the miracle, (I know not how he hath been overlook'd by Mr Hume) differs from Tacitus, in the account he gives of the lameness. The one represents it as being in the hand, the other, as in the leg *.

There are other circumstances regarding this story, on which I might make some remarks; but shall forbear, lest by entering into a minute discussion of particulars, that appear but trivial, when consider'd severally, I should tire both the reader and myself. I shall therefore only subjoin these simple questions. *First*, What emperor or other potentate was flattered in

* Manum æger. TACITUS. Debili crure. SUETONIUS.

his dignity and pretenſions by the miracles of our Lord? What eminent perſonage found himſelf intereſted to ſupport, by his authority and influence, the credit of theſe miracles? *Again*, What popular ſuperſtition or general and rooted prejudices were they calculated to confirm? Theſe two circumſtances, were there no other, make all the odds in the world betwixt the miracles of VESPASIAN and thoſe of JESUS CHRIST.

So much for the PAGAN miracles mentioned by the author.

SECTION V.

Examination of the POPISH *miracles mentioned by Mr Hume.*

THE author ſoon deſcends from ancient to modern times, and leaving *Paganiſm*,

nism, recurs to *Popery*, a much more fruitful ſource of lying wonders.

THE firſt of this kind he takes notice of *, is a Spaniſh miracle recorded in the memoirs of Cardinal *de Retz*. The ſtory, he ſays, is very memorable, and may well deſerve our conſideration. "When that "intriguing politician fled into Spain, to "avoid the perſecution of his enemies, he "paſs'd thro' Saragoſſa, the capital of Ar-"ragon; where he was ſhown in the ca-"thedral church, a man, who had ſerv'd "twenty years as a door-keeper of the "church, and was well known to every "body in town, that had ever paid their "devotions at that cathedral. He had "been for ſo long a time wanting a leg; "but recover'd that limb, by the rubbing "of holy oil upon the ſtump; *and, when* "*the cardinal examin'd it, he found it to be*

* p. 193. &c.

" *a true natural leg, like the other.*" Would not any perſon imagine, from the laſt words of the ſentence, that the cardinal had order'd the man to put off his ſhoes and ſtockings, that, by touch as well as by ſight, he might be ſatisfied, there was no artifice us'd, but that both his legs conſiſted of genuine fleſh and bone? Yet the truth is, his Eminency did not think it worth while to examine any one circumſtance of this wonderful narration, but contented himſelf with reporting it preciſely as it had been told him. His words literally tranſlated are, " In that church " they ſhowed me a man, whoſe buſineſs " it was to light the lamps, of which they " have a prodigious number, telling me, " that he had been ſeen ſeven years at the " gate, with one leg only. I ſaw him " there with two *." Not one word of trial

* L'on m'y montra un homme, qui ſervoit à allumer les lampes,

trial or examination, or even so much as a single question asked on the subject; not a syllable of his finding the leg to be either true or false, natural or artificial, like the other or unlike. I have a better opinion both of the candour and of the good sense of Mr Hume, than to imagine, he would have design'dly misrepresented this story, in order to render it fitter for his purpose. I believe the source of this error hath been solely the trusting to his memory in the relation which he gave, and not taking the trouble to consult the passage in the memoirs. This conjecture appears the more probable, as he hath made some other alterations, which are no way conducive to his design; such as, that the man had been seen in the church *twenty* years wanting a leg, and that he was a

lampes, qui y sont en nombre prodigieux; et l'on me dit, qu'on l'y avoit vu sept ans a la porte de cette eglise, avec une seule jambe. Je l'y vis avec deux. *Liv.* 4. *l'an* 1654.

door-keeper;

door-keeper; whereas the memoir-writer ſays only *ſeven* years, and that he was one *who lighted the lamps* *.

" This miracle was vouch'd," ſays the author, " by all the canons of the church; " and the whole company in town were " appeal'd to, for a confirmation of the " fact, whom the Cardinal found, by their " zealous devotion, to be thorough belie- " vers of the miracle." 'Tis true, that the company in town were appeal'd to, by thoſe eccleſiaſtics; but 'tis alſo true, that *De Retz*, by his own account, ſeems not to have aſked any man a queſtion on the ſubject. He acknowledges indeed, that an

* Since finiſhing this tract, I have ſeen an edition of Mr Hume's eſſays, *&c.* later than that here referr'd to. It is printed at London 1760. I muſt do the author the juſtice to obſerve, that, in this edition, he hath corrected the miſtake, as to the cardinal's examining the man's leg, of which he only ſays, " The cardinal aſſures us, that he ſaw him with two " legs." He ſtill calls him a *door-keeper*, and ſays, that he had ſerved *twenty* years in this capacity.

anniverſary

anniverſary feſtival, inſtituted in commemoration of the miracle, was celebrated by a vaſt concourſe of people of all ranks.

"Here," continues the eſſayiſt, "the "relater was alſo contemporary to the "ſuppos'd prodigy, of an incredulous and "libertine character, as well as of great "genius." But of what weight, in this affair, is either the genius or the incredulity of the relater, ſince, by Mr Hume's confeſſion, he had no faith in the relation? Strange indeed is the uſe which the eſſayiſt makes of this circumſtance. "What *adds* "*mightily*," ſays he, "to the force of the "evidence, and may double our ſurpriſe "on this occaſion, is, that the cardinal "himſelf, who relates the ſtory, ſeems not "to give any credit to it." It doth not in the leaſt ſurpriſe me, that the cardinal gives no credit to this relation; but I am beyond meaſure ſurpriſed, that Mr Hume ſhould repreſent this circumſtance as *add-*

ing

ing mightily to the force of the evidence. Is then a ſtory which is reported by a man of genius, the more credible that he doth not believe it? Or, Is it the more incredible that he doth believe it? What would the author have ſaid, if the cardinal had told us, that he gave credit to the relation? Might he not, in that caſe, have very pertinently pleaded the great genius, and penetration, and incredulity of the relater, as *adding mightily* to the force of the evidence? On that hypotheſis, he ſurely might, for pretty obvious reaſons. Uncommon penetration qualifies a man for detecting fraud; and it requires evidence greater than ordinary to ſurmount incredulity. The belief therefore of ſuch a perſon as the cardinal, who had not only the means of diſcovering an impoſture, as he was cotemporary and on the ſpot, but the ability to diſcover it, as he was a man of genius, and not over-credulous; his belief,

lief, I ſay, would evidently have been no ſmall preſumption of the truth of the miracle. How his diſbelief can be in like manner a preſumption of its truth, is to me incomprehenſible. Ay but, rejoins the author, "as he ſeems not to give any "credit to it, he cannot be ſuſpected of "any concurrence in the holy fraud." Very well. I am ſatisfied that a man's TESTIMONY is *the more* to be regarded, that he is above being ſuſpected of concurring in *any fraud*, call it holy or unholy. But I want to know why, on the very ſame account, his OPINION is *the leſs* to be regarded. For my part, I find no difficulty in believing every article of the narration for which the cardinal gives his teſtimony: notwithſtanding this, I may be of the ſame opinion with him; that the account given by the dean and canons, which is their teſtimony, not his, was all a fiction. But it is not with the cardinal's

teſtimony we are here concern'd: about that there is no diſpute. It is with his *opinion*. Are then a man's ſentiments about a matter of fact, I muſt inſiſt on it, the leſs worthy of regard, either becauſe he is a man of genius, and not at all credulous, or becauſe he cannot be ſuſpected of any concurrence in a holy fraud? Are they the more improbable on theſe accounts? The eſſayiſt, when he reflects, will be the laſt man in the world, that will aſſiſt in eſtabliſhing a maxim ſo unfavourable, not only to candour, but even to genius and ſcepticiſm: and indeed there are few, if any, that would be greater ſufferers by it than himſelf.

But leaving this, as one of the unfathomable depths of the eſſay, I proceed to the other circumſtances. "The mi-" racle," ſays the author, "of ſo ſingular " a nature, as could *ſcarce* admit of a " counterfeit." He did well at leaſt to

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uſe the word *ſcarce*; for if every viſitant was as little deſirous of prying into the ſecret, as the cardinal, nothing could be more eaſily counterfeited: "And the witneſſes very numerous, and all of them, "*in a manner*, ſpectators of the fact, to "which they gave their teſtimony." By the *very numerous witneſſes*, I ſuppoſe he means the whole company in town, who were appeal'd to. They were all, *in a manner*, ſpectators of the fact. What preciſe abatement the author intended we ſhould make, from the ſenſe of the word *ſpectators*, on account of the qualifying phraſe *in a manner*, I ſhall not preſume to determine; but ſhall obſerve, from the memoirs, that it was not ſo much as pretended by the canons, that any of the citizens had ſeen the miracle perform'd; 'twas only pretended, that they had ſeen the man formerly at the gate of the church, wanting a leg. Nor is it alledged, that

any of them was at more pains in examining the matter, either before or after the recovery of the leg, than the cardinal was. They were therefore properly no ſpectators of the fact. The phraſe *in a manner*, ought, I imagine, to have been placed in the end of the ſentence, which would have run thus: " to which they, *in a manner*, gave " their teſtimony:" for no direct teſtimony was either aſked of them, or given by them; their belief is inferr'd from their devotion.

I have been the more particular in my remarks on the circumſtances of this ſtory, not becauſe there was need of theſe remarks; for, tho' to the eſſayiſt the relation appear'd very *memorable*, to me, and, I believe, to moſt people, it appears very *trifling*; but that the reader might have this further ſpecimen of the author's talents in embelliſhing. To the above-mentioned, and all other ſuch idle tales, this ſhort and

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ſimple anſwer will, by every man of ſenſe, be thought ſufficient. *The country where the miracle is ſaid to have been wrought, is* SPAIN; *the people who propagated the faith of it, were* THE CLERGY. What compariſon, in point of credibility, can be made between miracles, which, with no viſible ſupport but their own evidence, had at once to encounter, and did in fact overcome the abhorrence of the prieſt, and the tyranny of the magiſtrate, the inſolence of the learned, and the bigotry of the ſuperſtitious: what compariſon, I ſay, can be made between ſuch, and any prodigies ſaid to have been perform'd in a country, where all the powers of the nation, ſecular and eccleſiaſtical, the literature of the ſchools, ſuch as it is, and the prejudices of the people, conſpire in eſtabliſhing their credit; a country ſunk in the moſt obdurate ſuperſtition that ever diſgraced human nature

nature *, a country where the awe of the inquiſition is ſo great, that no perſon, whatever be his ſentiments, dares mutter

* This perhaps will appear to ſome to be too ſevere a cenſure on a country called Chriſtian, and may be thought to reflect on Chriſtianity itſelf. I do not think it fairly capable of ſuch a conſtruction. That the corruption of the beſt things produces the worſt, hath grown into a proverb; and, on the moſt impartial inquiry, I do not imagine it will be found, that any ſpecies of idolatry ever tended ſo directly to extirpate humanity, gratitude, natural affection, equity, mutual confidence, good faith, and every amiable and generous principle from the human breaſt, as that groſs perverſion of the Chriſtian religion which is eſtabliſh'd in Spain. It might eaſily be ſhown, that the human ſacrifices offer'd by Heathens, had not half the tendency to corrupt the heart, and conſequently deſerve not to be view'd with half the horror, as thoſe celebrated among the Spaniards, with ſo much pomp, and barbarous feſtivity, at an *auto da fe*. It will not ſurely be affirm'd, that our Saviour reflected on the Moſaic inſtitution, or genuine Judaiſm, when he ſaid, *Wo unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye compaſs ſea and land to make one proſelyte, and when he is made,* YE MAKE *him twofold more the child of hell than yourſelves.* Yet the words plainly imply, that even *Pagans*, by being converted to the *Judaiſm* that was then profeſſed, were *made* children of hell, and conſequently corrupted, inſtead of being reform'd. See Matth. xxiii. 15.

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a ſyllable againſt any opinion that hath obtain'd the patronage of their ſpiritual guides? But that I may not be accus'd of prepoſſeſſion, or ſuſpected of exaggerating, I ſhall only give the ſentiments of two eminent foreigners (who were not Proteſtants, and may therefore be ſuppos'd the more impartial) concerning that nation, and the influence which the holy tribunal has both on their character and manners. Voltaire *, ſpeaking of the inquiſition as eſtabliſh'd in Spain, ſays, "Their form of proceeding is an infal-
"lible way to deſtroy whomſoever the in-
"quiſitors pleaſe. The priſoners are not
"confronted with the informers; and
"there is no informer who is not liſten'd
"to. A public criminal, an infamous
"perſon, a child, a proſtitute, are credit-
"able accuſers. Even the ſon may de-
"poſe againſt his father; the wife againſt

* Eſſai ſur l'hiſtoire générale, chap. 118.

"her

" her husband. In fine, the prisoner is
" compell'd to inform against himself, to
" divine, and to confess, the crime laid
" to his charge; of which often he is ig-
" norant. This procedure, unheard of till
" the institution of this court, makes the
" whole kingdom tremble. Suspicion
" reigns in every breast. Friendship and
" openness are at an end. The brother
" dreads his brother, the father his son.
" Hence taciturnity is become the charac-
" teristic of a nation endued with all the
" vivacity natural to the inhabitants of a
" warm and fruitful climate. To this tri-
" bunal we must likewise impute that pro-
" found ignorance of sound philosophy, in
" which Spain lies buried, whilst Germa-
" ny, England, France, and even Italy,
" have discover'd so many truths, and en-
" larged the sphere of our knowledge. Ne-
" ver is human nature so debased, as when
" ignorance is armed with power." " 'Tis
" necessary,"

" neceſſary," ſays Monteſquieu *, in the humble remonſtrance to the inquiſitors of Spain and Portugal, " that we advertiſe " you of one thing; 'tis, that if any per- " ſon, in future times, ſhall dare aſſert, " that, in the age wherein we live, the " Europeans were civilized, YOU will be " quoted to prove that they were barba- " rians, and the idea people will form of " you, will be ſuch as will diſhonour " your age, and bring hatred on all your " cotemporaries."

I COME now to conſider the miracles ſaid to have been perform'd in the church-yard of Saint Medard, at the tomb of *Abbé* Paris. On theſe the author hath expatiated with great parade, exulting, that he hath found in them, as he imagines, what, in reſpect of number, and nature, and evidence, may outvie the miracles of

* De l'eſprit des loix, liv. 25. chap. 13.

holy writ. Yet ſhould we admit them to be true, how they can be conſider'd as proofs of any doctrine, or how they can affect the evidence of the miracles recorded in ſcripture, 'twill not perhaps be eaſy to diſcover. But ſetting that queſtion aſide, I propoſe to examine their evidence; and that, not by entering into a particular inquiry concerning each ſeparate fact mention'd in Montgeron's collection, as ſuch an inquiry would appear, to every judicious reader, both tedious and impertinent; but by making a few general obſervations, founded in unqueſtionable fact, and moſtly ſupported even by the authority of Montgeron, that doughty champion of the Janſeniſt ſaint *.

* The character of his book is very juſtly and very briefly expreſſed in *Le ſiecle de Louis* XIV. in theſe words: "Si ce "livre ſubſiſtait un jour, et que les autres fuſſent perdus, la po- "ſterit croirait que notre ſiecle a été un tems de barbarie," *chap.* 33.

Firſt,

First, Let it be remarked, that it was often objected by the enemies of the saint, and scarce contradicted, never confuted, by his friends, that the prostrations at his sepulchre *produced* more diseases, than they *cur'd*. The ingenious author lately quoted, in the account he gives of the affairs of the church in the ninth century, taking occasion incidentally to mention the miracles of the *Abbé*, speaks of this circumstance, as a thing universally known, and undeniable *. "I should not take notice," says he, "of an epidemical folly with "which the people of Dijon were seized "in 844, occasion'd by one Saint Benig- "nus, who threw those into convulsions "who prayed on his tomb; I should not, "I say, mention this popular superstition, "had it not been furiously reviv'd in our "days, in parallel circumstances. It "seems, as if the same follies were de-

* Essai sur l'histoire générale, chap. 21.

" ſtin'd to make their appearance, from " time to time, on the theatre of the " world: but good ſenſe is alſo the ſame " at all times; and nothing ſo judicious " hath been ſaid, concerning the modern " miracles wrought on the tomb of I know " not what deacon at Paris, as what a " biſhop of Lyons ſaid, concerning thoſe " of Dijon. *A ſtrange ſaint indeed, that* " *maims thoſe who pay their devoirs to him.* " *I ſhould think, miracles ought to be per-* " *form'd for the curing, and not for the in-* " *flicting of maladies.*"

The *ſecond* obſervation is, That the inſtances of perſons cur'd are extremely *few*, compar'd with the multitudes of people in diſtreſs, who night and day attended the ſepulchre, imploring in vain the interceſſion of the ſaint. The crouds of ſick and infirm, who flocked to the tomb for relief, were, by all accounts, innumerable: whereas all the cures which the zealous

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and indefatigable Montgeron could procure vouchers of, amounted only to NINE. The author therefore muſt be underſtood, as ſpeaking with great latitude, when he ſays, "There ſurely never was ſo great "a number of miracles aſcrib'd to one "perſon, as thoſe which were lately ſaid "to have been wrought in France, upon "the tomb of *Abbé* Paris, the famous Jan-"ſeniſt, with whoſe ſanctity the people "were ſo long deluded *." If *thouſands* of diſeaſed perſons had applied for medicine to ſome ignorant quack, in the aſſurance of his extraordinary abilities; would it be matter of ſurpriſe to a reaſonable man, that, of ſo many, *eight* or *nine* ſhould be found, whoſe diſtempers had taken a favourable turn, whilſt they were uſing his ſpecifics, and had thereby given countenance to the deluſion? I think it

* p. 195.

would

would be matter of ſurpriſe that there were ſo few.

I ſhall obſerve, *thirdly*, That *impoſture* was actually detected, and proved in ſeveral inſtances. That the reader may be ſatisfied of this, I muſt intreat him to have recourſe to the Archbiſhop of Sens' *Paſtoral inſtruction*; a book which Mr Hume could not, with propriety, take any notice of, having poſitively aſſerted, that "the ene-"mies to thoſe opinions, in whoſe favour "the miracles were ſaid to have been "wrought, were never able diſtinctly to "refute or detect them *." This prelate, on the contrary, hath not only given a diſtinct refutation of ſome of thoſe pretended miracles, but hath clearly expos'd the deceit and little artifices by which their credit was ſupported. I intend not to deſcend to particulars, and ſhall therefore only refer the reader to the book itſelf,

* p. 195.

and

and beg that he will peruſe what relates to the caſes of *Jacques Laurent Menedrieux*, *Jean Nivet*, *Sieur le Doulx*, *Laleu*, *Anne Coulon*, the widow *de Lorme*, as well as *Mademoiſelle le Franc*, of whom the eſſayiſt hath taken ſome notice in a note. In this peruſal, the reader will obſerve the ſhameful prevarications of ſome Janſeniſt witneſſes, for whom Mr Hume would fain apologize, by telling us pleaſantly, they were *tamper'd with* *. I ſhall only add on this head, that the detection of fraud in ſome inſtances, juſtly brings ſuſpicion on all the other inſtances. A man whom I know to have lied to me, on ſeveral occaſions, I ſhall ſuſpect, on every occaſion, where I have not acceſs to diſcover, whether what he affirms be true or falſe. 'Tis in the ſame way we judge of the ſpirit and conduct of parties, as of individuals.

* p. 197. in the note.

I obſerve, *fourthly*, That all the cures recorded by Montgeron, as duly atteſted, were ſuch as might have been effected by *natural* means. There are two kinds of miracles, to which Mr Hume hath alluded in a note, tho' he does not directly make the diſtinction. One is, when the event, conſider'd by itſelf, is evidently *preternatural*. Of this kind are, raiſing the dead, walking on water, making whole the maimed; for by no natural cauſes can theſe effects be produced. The other kind is, when the event, conſider'd by itſelf, is *natural*, that is, may be produced by natural cauſes, but is denominated miraculous, on account of the manner. That a ſick perſon ſhould be reſtor'd to health, is not, when conſider'd ſingly, preternatural; but that health ſhould be reſtor'd by the command of a man, undoubtedly is. Let us hear the author on this point: " Sometimes an event may

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" not, *in itself*, *seem* to be contrary to the " laws of nature, and yet, if it were real, " it might, by reason of some circumstan- " ces, be denominated a miracle; because, " *in fact*, it is contrary to these laws. " Thus, if a person claiming a divine au- " thority, should command a sick person " to be well, a healthful man to fall down " dead, the clouds to pour rain, the " winds to blow, in short, should order " many natural events, which immediate- " ly follow upon his command; these " might justly be esteemed miracles, be- " cause they are really, in this case, con- " trary to the laws of nature. For if a- " ny suspicion remain, that the event and " command concurr'd by accident, there " is no miracle, and no transgression of " the laws of nature. If this suspicion be " remov'd, there is evidently a miracle, " and a transgression of these laws; be- " cause nothing can be more contrary to

" nature, than that the voice or command " of a man, ſhould have ſuch an influ- " ence *." From what hath been ſaid, it appears, that theſe two kinds of miracles muſt differ conſiderably in reſpect of evidence, ſince the latter naturally gives room for a ſuſpicion, which is abſolutely excluded from the former. In the former, when the fact or event is prov'd, the miracle is unqueſtionable. In the latter, the fact may be prov'd, and yet the miracle may be juſtly queſtion'd. It therefore merits our attention, that all the miracles recorded in Montgeron's collection, that is, all for which any rational evidence is pretended, were of the ſecond kind. One of the moſt conſiderable of thoſe cures, was that of the Spaniſh gentleman, who had loſt one eye, and was diſtreſſed with an inflammation in the other. The inflamed eye was cured, but the loſt eye was

* p. 181. in the note.

not

not reſtored. Had there been a reproduction of the member which had periſhed, a ſufficient proof of the fact, would have been a ſufficient proof of the miracle. But as the caſe was otherwiſe, the fact vouch'd may be admitted, without admitting any miracle. The cures ſaid to have been perform'd on thoſe patients who were afflicted with paralytic or dropſical diſorders, or that perform'd on Louiſa Coirin, who had a tumor on her breaſt, will not appear to be intitled to a rank in the firſt claſs. As little can the cure of Peter Gautier claim that honour. One of his eyes had been prick'd with an awl; in conſequence of which the aqueous humour dropped out, and he became blind of that eye. His ſight was reſtor'd, whilſt he paid his addreſſes to the *Abbé*. But that a puncture in the cornea of the eye will often heal of itſelf, and that the aqueous humour, after it hath been quite loſt, will

be recruited, and conſequently, that the faculty of viſion will, in ſuch a caſe, be recover'd, is what every oculiſt can aſſure us of. The loſs of the watery humour, is the conſtant effect of a very common operation in ſurgery, couching the cataract. Hence we may learn, how we ought to underſtand theſe words of the author, " The curing of the ſick, giving " hearing to the deaf, and ſight to the " blind, were every where talked of, as " the uſual effects of that holy ſepul- " chre *." As therefore the alledged miracles were all of the ſecond claſs, 'tis only from the attendant circumſtances we can judge, whether the facts, tho' acknowledged, were miraculous or not.

In order to enlighten us on this point, I obſerve, *fifthly*, That *none* of the cures were *inſtantaneous*. We have not indeed the ſame hold of the deceaſed *Abbé*, as of

* p. 195.

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a living prophet, who pretends to work miracles. Thoſe who attend the latter, can know exactly, to whom he grants the benefit of his miraculous aid. They can judge alſo, whether the ſupplicant's recovery be coincident, in reſpect of time, with the prophet's volition or command. In the former caſe, we have not acceſs to judge of either; and conſequently, there is much greater ſcope for fancy and credulity to operate. No voice was ever ſaid to have proceeded from the tomb of the bleſſed deacon, as his votaries ſtyled him. They obtained no audible anſwer to their prayers. There are however ſome circumſtances, by which a probable conjecture may be made concerning the efficiency of the ſaint in the cures aſcrib'd to him. One is, if the cure inſtantaneouſly follow'd the firſt devotions at the tomb. Supernatural cures differ, in this particular, as much as in any other, from thoſe which are effected

fected by natural means, that they are not *gradually*, but *inſtantly*, perfected. Now of which kind were the cures of Saint Medard? From the accounts that are given, 'tis evident, that they were *gradual*. That ſome of them were *ſudden*, is alledged; but that any of them were *inſtantaneous*, or immediately follow'd the firſt application, is not even pretended. All the worſhippers at the tomb, perſiſted for *days*, ſeveral of them for *weeks*, and ſome for *months* ſucceſſively, daily imploring the interceſſion of the *Abbé*, before they receiv'd relief from their complaints; and the relief which was receiv'd, is, in moſt caſes, acknowledged to have been gradual.

I obſerve, *ſixthly*, That moſt of the devotees either had been uſing *medicines* before, and continued to uſe them, during their applications to the ſaint; or, that their diſtempers had *abated*, before they determin'd to ſolicit his help. That the

Spaniſh

Spaniſh youth had been uſing, all the while, a medicine preſcrib'd by an eminent oculiſt, was prov'd by the depoſitions of witneſſes; that Gautier had begun to recover his ſight, before he had recourſe to the ſepulchre, was atteſted, not only by his uncle, but even by himſelf, when, as the Archbiſhop of Sens informs us, he ſign'd a recantation of what he had formerly advanced. With regard to the reſt, it appears at leaſt probable, from the circumſtances of the proof, that they were uſing the preſcriptions of the phyſicians, whom they had conſulted before applying to the deacon, and who were afterward requir'd to give their teſtimony, concerning the nature and malignancy of the different diſeaſes.

The *ſeventh* obſervation is, That ſome of the cures atteſted were *incomplete*. This was manifeſtly the caſe of the Spaniard, who was reliev'd only from the moſt inconſiderable

conſiderable part of his complaint. Even the cure of *Mademoiſelle* Thibault, which was as great a ſubject of exultation to the partiſans of the *Abbé* as any other, was not complete. Not only was ſhe confin'd to her bed, for many days, after the decreaſe of her dropſy; but ſhe ſtill remain'd incapable of moving two of her fingers. Silva, phyſician to the Duke of Orleans, atteſted this; adding expreſsly, that he *could not look on her as being cur'd.*

The *eighth* and laſt obſervation I ſhall make on this ſubject is, That the relief granted ſome of them was but *temporary.* This was clearly prov'd to be the caſe of the Spaniard. That ſoon after his return home, he relapſed into his former malady, the prelate I have often quoted, hath, by the certificates and letters which he procur'd from Madrid, put beyond controverſy. Among theſe, there are letters from a Spaniſh grandee, Don Francis Xavier,

vier, and from the patient's uncle, beſides a certificate ſigned by himſelf.

After the above obſervations, I believe, there will be no occaſion for ſaying much on this ſubject. The author has, in a note, artfully enough pointed out his aim, that it might not be overlook'd by the careleſs reader *. "There is another "book," ſays he, "in three volumes, "(called, *Recueil des miracles de l'Abbé Pa-"ris*) giving an account of many of theſe "miracles, and accompanied with prefa-"tory diſcourſes, which are very well "wrote." He adds, "There runs, how-"ever, thro' the whole of theſe, a ridi-"culous compariſon betwixt the miracles "of our Saviour and thoſe of the *Abbé*; "wherein 'tis aſſerted, that the evidence "for the latter is equal to that for the "former." At firſt reading, one is apt, with ſurpriſe, to imagine, that the author

* p. 196.

is going to make ſome atonement for the tenets of the eſſay, by turning advocate for the miracles of Jeſus Chriſt; and by ſhowing, that theſe are not affected by his doctrine. But on this point we are not long held in ſuſpenſe. He ſubjoins, " As " if the teſtimony of men could ever be " put in the balance with that of God " himſelf, who conducted the pen of the " inſpired writers." An ingenious piece of raillery without queſtion. Is it poſſible, in a politer manner, or in more obliging terms, to tell the Chriſtian world, *They are fools*; and that all who are ſilly enough to believe the miracles recorded in ſcripture, are not intitled to be argued with as *men*. How? They are ſo abſurd as to believe the ſcriptures to be the word of God, on the evidence of the miracles wrought by our Lord and his apoſtles; and that theſe miracles were wrought, they could not believe on any teſtimony,

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leſs than that of God, reporting them in the ſcriptures; and thus, by making inſpiration and miracles reciprocally foundations to each other, they, in effect, admit both without any foundation at all. After this handſome compliment to the friends of holy writ, he thinks himſelf at liberty to be very explicit on the comparative evidence of the miracles of the *Abbé*, and thoſe of Jeſus: "If theſe writers "indeed were to be conſider'd merely as "human teſtimony, the French author is "*very moderate* in his compariſon; ſince "he might, *with ſome appearance of rea-* "*ſon*, pretend, that the Janſeniſt miracles "*much ſurpaſs* the other, in evidence and "authority." Was ever ſo rough an aſſault preceded by ſo ſmooth, but ſo inſidious a preamble? Is it then ſtill the fate of Jeſus to be betrayed with a kiſs? But notwithſtanding this author's declaration, no Chriſtian will have reaſon to dread the

iſſue of the compariſon. Mr Hume hath not enter'd on particulars, neither ſhall I enter on them. I ſhould not incline to tire my reader with repetitions, which, in a minute inquiry, would be inevitable. I ſhall therefore only deſire him, if he think it needful, to peruſe a ſecond time the eight foregoing obſervations. Let him try the miracles of our Lord by this touch-ſtone; and I perſuade myſelf, he will be ſatisfied, that there is *no appearance of reaſon* to pretend, that the Janſeniſt miracles *much ſurpaſs* the other, or even equal them, in evidence and authority.

The author triumphs not a little in the obſervation, that the reports of the prodigies perform'd by the deacon, were violently oppos'd by the civil magiſtrate, and by the Jeſuits, the moſt learned ſociety in the kingdom. He could ſee the importance of this circumſtance in the caſe of *Abbé* Paris, tho' not in the caſe of Jeſus Chriſt.

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But that the difference of the caſes, as well as their reſemblance, may better appear; it ought likewiſe to be obſerved, that Janſeniſm, tho' not the *ruling* faction, was at that time the *popular* faction; that this popularity was not the effect of the miracles of the *Abbé*, but antecedent to theſe miracles; that, on the contrary, the Jeſuits were extremely *unpopular*; and that many, who had no more faith in the miracles of Saint Medard than Mr Hume hath, were well pleas'd to connive at a deluſion, which at once plagued and mortified a body of men, that were become almoſt univerſally odious.

I ſhall only add, that nothing could more effectually expoſe the folly of thoſe pretenſions, than the expedient by which they were made to ceaſe. In conſequence of an order from the King, the ſepulchre was incloſed with a wall, and the votaries were debarr'd from approaching the tomb.

The

The author ſays in relation to this *, " No " Janſeniſt was ever embarraſs'd to ac- " count for the ceſſation of the miracles, " when the churchyard was ſhut up by " the King's edict." Certain it is, that " God is maſter of his own graces and " works." But it is equally certain, that neither reaſon nor the goſpel leads us to think, that any human expedient will prove ſucceſsful, which is calculated to fruſtrate the decrees of Heaven. Both, on the contrary, teach us, that men never more directly *promote* the deſigns of their maker, than when they intend directly to *oppoſe* them. It was not thus, that either Phariſees or Sadducees, Jews or Gentiles, ſucceeded in their oppoſition to the miracles of Jeſus and his apoſtles. The opinion of Gamaliel † was undoubtedly judicious: *If this counſel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye* CAN-

* p. 198. in the note. † Acts v. 38. 39.

NOT

NOT *overthrow it; beware therefore, leſt ye be found fighting even againſt God.* To conclude, Did the Janſeniſt cauſe derive any advantage from thoſe pretended miracles? None at all. It even ſuffer'd by them. It is juſtly remarked by Voltaire *, that "the tomb of the deacon Paris, prov'd in "effect, in the minds of all people of "ſenſe, the tomb of Janſeniſm." How unlike in all reſpects the miracles recorded by the Evangeliſts!

THUS I have briefly inquir'd into the nature and evidence, firſt of the *Pagan*, and next of the *Popiſh* miracles, mentioned by Mr Hume; and have, I hope, ſufficiently evinced, that the miracles of the New Teſtament can ſuffer nothing by the compariſon; that, on the contrary, as, in painting, the ſhades ſerve to heighten the glow of the colours; and,

* Siecle de Louis XIV. chap. 33.

in

in muſic, the diſcords to ſet off the ſweetneſs of the melody; ſo the value of theſe genuine miracles is enhanced by the contraſt of thoſe paltry counterfeits.

SECTION VI.

Abſtracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been miracles in former times; or ſuch events as, when compar'd with the preſent conſtitution of the world, would by Mr Hume be denominated miraculous.

I READILY concur with Mr Hume in maintaining, that when, merely by the force of REASON, we attempt to inveſtigate the *origin of worlds* *, we get beyond our ſphere, and muſt infallibly bewilder ourſelves in hypotheſes and conjec-

* Eſſay 12. Of the academical or ſceptical philoſophy. part 3.

ture,

ture. REASON indeed (which vainly boasts her all-sufficiency) hath sometimes pretended to carry men to this amazing height. But there is ground to suspect, that, in such instances, the ascent of *reason*, as the author elegantly expresseth it *, hath been aided by the wings of *imagination*. If we will not be indebted to REVELATION, for our knowledge of this article, we must, for aught I can perceive, be satisfied to live in ignorance. There is, however, one question distinct from the former, tho' akin to it, which, even from the principles of reason, we may with great probability determine. The question I mean is, Whether the world had an origin or not?

That there hath been an infinite, eternal, and independent series of finite, successive, and dependent beings, such as men, and consequently that the world

* Essay 11. Of a particular providence and future state.

had no beginning, appears, from the bare conſideration of the thing, extremely incredible, if not altogether abſurd. The abſtract argument us'd on this head, might appear too metaphyſical and refin'd: I ſhall not therefore introduce it; but ſhall recur to topics, which are more familiar, and which, tho' they do not demonſtrate, that the eternity of the world is abſolutely impoſſible, evince, that it is highly improbable, or rather, certainly falſe. Theſe topics I ſhall only mention, as they are pretty obvious, and have been often urged with great energy by the learned, both ancient and modern. Such are, the late invention of letters, and of all the ſciences and arts by which human life is civilized; the known origin of moſt nations, ſtates and kingdoms; and the firſt peopling of many countries. 'Tis in our power at preſent to trace the hiſtory of every people backwards to times of the greateſt

greateſt barbarity and ignorance. Europe, tho' not the largeſt of the four parts into which the earth is divided, is, on many accounts, the moſt conſiderable. But what a different face doth Europe wear at preſent, from what it did three thouſand years ago? How immenſe the odds in knowledge, in arts, in policy, in every thing? How eaſy is the intercourſe, and how extenſive the acquaintance, which men can now enjoy with all, even the remoteſt regions of the globe, compar'd with what was, or could have been enjoy'd, in that time of darkneſs and ſimplicity? A man differs not more from a child, than the human race now differs from what the human race was then. Three thouſand years ago, appear indeed to mark a very diſtant epoch; and yet it is but as yeſterday, compar'd with eternity. This, when duly weighed, every thinking perſon will acknowledge to be as ſtrong moral evi-

dence, as the ſubject can admit, (and that I imagine is very ſtrong) that the world had a beginning.

I ſhall make a ſuppoſition, which will perhaps appear whimſical, but which will tend to elucidate the argument I am enforcing. In antediluvian times, when the longevity of man was ſuch as to include ſome centuries, I ſhall ſuppoſe, that a few boys had been tranſported to a deſert iſland, and there left together, juſt old enough to make ſhift to ſuſtain themſelves, as thoſe in the golden age are fabled to have done, on acorns, and other ſpontaneous productions of the ſoil. I ſhall ſuppoſe, that they had lived there for ſome hundreds of years, had remember'd nothing of their coming into the iſland, nor of any other perſon whatſoever; and that thus they had never had acceſs to know, or hear, of either birth, or death. I ſhall ſuppoſe them to enter into a ſerious diſ-

quiſition

quiſition concerning their own duration, the queſtion having been ſtarted, Whether they had exiſted from eternity, or had once begun to be? They recur to memory: but memory can furniſh them with nothing certain or deciſive. If it muſt be allowed, that it contains no trace of a beginning of exiſtence, it muſt alſo be allow'd, that it reaches not beyond a few centuries at moſt. They obſerve beſides, concerning this faculty, that the further back it goes, it becomes the more indiſtinct, terminating at laſt in confuſion and darkneſs. Some things however they diſtinctly recollect, and are aſſured of. They remember, they were once of much lower ſtature, and of ſmaller ſize; they had leſs bodily ſtrength; and all their mental faculties were weaker. They know, that, in the powers both of body and mind, they have advanced, by imperceptible degrees, to the pitch they are now arriv'd at.

at. Theſe conſiderations, eſpecially when fortified by ſome analogous obſervations they might have made, on the growth of herbs and trees, would have ſhown the probability to be entirely on the ſide of thoſe who aſſerted, that their exiſtence had a beginning: And tho', on account of the narrow ſphere of their knowledge and experience, the argument could not have appear'd to them in all its ſtrength, we, from our larger acquaintance with nature, even abſtracting from our knowledge of man in particular, muſt be ſatisfied, that it would have been ſtrictly analogical and juſt. Exactly *ſimilar*, I ſhould rather ſay, the very *ſame*, is the argument I have been urging for the origination of the ſpecies. Make but a few alterations in phraſeology; for *memory*, ſubſtitute *hiſtory and tradition*; for *hundreds* of years, ſay *thouſands*; for *the powers of body and mind*, put *the arts and ſciences*; and, with

theſe,

theſe, and perhaps one or two more ſuch variations, you will find the argument as applicable in the one caſe, as in the other. Now, if it be granted, that the human ſpecies muſt have had a beginning, it will hardly be queſtion'd, that every other animal ſpecies, or even that the univerſe, muſt have had a beginning.

BUT in order to prove the propoſition laid down in the title of this ſection, 'tis not neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the world had a beginning. Admit it had not, and obſerve the conſequence. Thus much muſt be admitted alſo, that not barely for a *long continued*, but for an ETERNAL, ſucceſſion of generations, mankind were in a ſtate little ſuperior to the beaſts; that of a ſudden, there came a moſt aſtoniſhing change upon the ſpecies; that they exerted talents and capacities, of which there appear'd not the ſmalleſt veſtiges, during the

eternity

eternity preceding; that they acquir'd ſuch knowledge as procur'd them a kind of empire, not only over the vegetable and animal worlds, but even, in ſome reſpect, over the elements, and all the unwieldy powers of matter; that, in conſequence of this, they were quickly rais'd, much more above the ſtate they had been formerly and eternally in, than ſuch their former and eternal ſtate was above that of the brute creation. If ſuch a revolution in nature, ſuch a thorough, general, and ſudden change as this, would not be denominated miraculous, 'tis not in my power to conceive what would. I could not eſteem it a greater miracle, hardly ſo great, that any ſpecies of beaſts, which have hitherto been doom'd to tread the earth, ſhould now get wings, and float about in the air.

Nor will this plea be ſubverted by that trite objection, That mankind may have been

been as much enlighten'd, perhaps myriads of years ago, as they are at preſent; but that by ſome *univerſal* calamity, ſuch as deluge or conflagration, which, after the rotation of many centuries, the earth poſſibly becomes liable to, all traces of erudition and of ſcience, of both the elegant and the uſeful arts, may have been effaced, and the human race, ſpringing from a few who had eſcap'd the common ruin, may have emerged anew, out of barbarity and ignorance. This hypotheſis doth but ſubſtitute one miracle in the place of another. Such general diſorder is entirely unconformable to our experience of the courſe of nature. Accordingly the deſtruction of the world by a deluge, the author hath number'd among thoſe prodigies, or miracles, which render the Pentateuch perfectly incredible.

If, on the contrary, we admit, that the

world had a beginning, (and will not every thinking perſon acknowledge, that this poſition is much more probable than the contrary?) the production of the world muſt be aſcrib'd either to *chance*, or to *intelligence*.

Shall we derive all things, ſpiritual and corporeal, from a principle ſo inſignificant as blind *chance?* Shall we ſay, with Epicurus, that the fortuitous concourſe of rambling atoms hath rear'd this beautiful and ſtupendous fabric? In that caſe, perhaps, we ſhould give an account of the origin of things, which, moſt people will think, could not properly be ſtyl'd miraculous. But is it, becauſe the formation of a grand and regular ſyſtem in this way, is conformable to the experienced order of nature? Quite the reverſe. Nothing can be more repugnant to univerſal experience, than that the leaſt organic body, not to mention the glorious frame of nature,

ture, ſhould be produced by ſuch a caſual jumble. It has therefore, in the higheſt degree poſſible, that particular quality of miracles, from which, according to the author's theory, their incredibility reſults, and may doubtleſs, in this looſe acceptation of the word, be term'd *miraculous*. But ſhould we affirm, that, to account thus for the origin of the univerſe, is to account for it by miracle; we ſhould be thought, I'm afraid, to ſpeak both weakly and improperly. There is ſomething here, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, which is far beyond the miraculous; ſomething, for which I know not whether any language can afford a proper appellation, unleſs it be the general appellations of *abſurdity* and *nonſenſe*.

Shall we then at laſt recur to the common doctrine, that the world was produced by an *intelligent cauſe?* On this ſuppoſition alſo, tho' incomparably the moſt

rational, it is evident, that in the creation, formation, or firſt production of things, call it by what name you pleaſe, a power muſt have been exerted, which, in reſpect of the preſent courſe of nature, may be ſtyled *miraculous*. I intend not to diſpute about a word, nor to inquire, whether that term can, in ſtrict propriety, be us'd of any exertions before the eſtabliſhment of the laws of nature. I uſe the word in the ſame latitude, in which the author commonly uſeth it in his reaſoning, for every event, that is not conformable to that courſe of nature with which we are acquainted by experience.

WHETHER, therefore, the world *had*, or *had not*, *a beginning*; whether, on the *firſt* ſuppoſition, in order to ſolve the numberleſs objections that ariſe, we *do*, or *do not*, recur to univerſal *cataſtrophes*; whether, on the *ſecond*, the production of things

things be aſcrib'd to *chance*, or to *deſign*; there is no poſſibility of accounting for the phenomena that preſently come under our notice, without having at laſt recourſe to MIRACLES; that is, to events altogether unconformable, or, if you will, contrary to the preſent courſe of nature known to us by experience. I cannot conceive an hypotheſis, which is not reducible to one or other of thoſe above mentioned. Whoever imagines, that another might be framed, which is not comprehended in any of thoſe, and which hath not as yet been devis'd by any ſyſtem-builder; let him make the experiment, and I will venture to prognoſticate, that he will ſtill find himſelf clogged with the ſame difficulty. The concluſion therefore above deduced, may be juſtly deem'd, till the contrary is ſhown, to be not only the reſult of one, but alike of every hypotheſis, of which the ſubject is ſuſceptible.

Thus

Thus it hath been evinced, as was propos'd, that abſtracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been, that there muſt have been, *miracles* in former times, or ſuch events, as, when compar'd with the preſent conſtitution of the world, would by Mr Hume be denominated miraculous.

SECTION VII.

Reviſal of Mr Hume's examination of the Pentateuch.

ALLOWING to the concluſion deduced in the foregoing ſection its proper weight, I ſhall alſo take into conſideration the *Pentateuch*, or five books of Moſes; or rather, I ſhall endeavour impartially to reviſe the examination which thoſe books have already undergone by the eſſayiſt

eſſayiſt *. It is, in this caſe, of the greateſt importance to know, whether the evidence on both ſides hath been fairly ſtated.

" HERE then we are firſt to conſider a " book," which is acknowledged, on all ſides, to be the moſt ancient record in the world, " preſented to us," we admit, " by " a barbarous and ignorant people †," at the ſame time exhibiting a ſyſtem of *Theiſm*, or natural religion, which is both rational and ſublime; with which nothing that was ever compil'd or produced, on this ſubject, in the moſt enlighten'd ages, by the moſt learned, and poliſhed nations,

* p. 205.

† The author adds, " wrote in an age, when they were " ſtill more barbarous." Theſe words I have omitted in the reviſal, becauſe they appear to me unintelligible. The age in which the Pentateuch was written, is indirectly compared to another age, he ſays not what: and all we can make of it is, that this people were more barbarous at that time, than at ſome other time, nobody knows when.

who

who were unacquainted with that book, will bear to be compar'd.

Mr Hume himſelf muſt allow, that this remark deſerves attention, ſince his reaſoning in another performance, which he calls, *The natural hiſtory of religion*, would lead us to expect the contrary. He there maintains, that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* are, and muſt be, the religion of rude and barbarous, and conſequently of ancient ages; that the true principles of *Theiſm*, or the belief of one almighty and wiſe being, the creator, the preſerver, and the ruler of heaven and earth, reſults from the greateſt improvements of the underſtanding in philoſophy and ſcience. To ſuppoſe the contrary, ſays he, is ſuppoſing, that "while men were ignorant and barba-"rous, they diſcover'd truth; but fell in-"to error, as ſoon as they acquir'd learn-"ing and politeneſs *." This reaſoning

* Natural hiſtory of religion. I.

is

is juſt, where-ever religion is to be conſider'd as the reſult of human reflections. What account then will the author give of this wonderful exception? That the reverſe is here the caſe, it is impoſſible for him to diſſemble. The people he himſelf calls ignorant and barbarous; yet they are not idolaters or polytheiſts. At the time when the book, which he examines, was compos'd, he ſeems to think, they even exceeded themſelves in barbarity; yet the ſentiments of theſe barbarians, on the ſubject of religion, the ſentiments which that very book preſents to us, may well put to ſilence the wiſdom of the politeſt nations on the earth. Need I remind Mr Hume of his expreſs declaration, that if a traveller were tranſported into any unknown region, and found the inhabitants "ignorant and barbarous, he might beforehand declare them idolaters, and there "is *ſcarce* a POSSIBILITY of his being

" miſtaken * ?" I know no ſatisfactory account that can be given of this exception, on the principles of the eſſayiſt. Nevertheleſs, nothing is more eaſy, than to give a ſatisfactory account of it, on the Chriſtian principles. This account is that which is given by the book itſelf. It is, that the religious tenets of that nation were not the reſult of their reaſonings, but proceeded from divine revelation. The contraſt we diſcern betwixt the ſons of ISRAEL, and the ancient GREEKS and ROMANS, is remarkable. The GREEKS and ROMANS, on all the ſubjects of human erudition, on all the liberal and uſeful arts, reaſoned like *men*; on the ſubject of religion, they prated like *children*. The ſons of ISRAEL, on the contrary, in all the ſciences and arts, were *children*; but, in their notions of religion, they were *men*; in the doctrines, for example, of the

* Natural hiſtory of religion. I.

unity,

unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniſcience, the omnipreſence, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and the creation, preſervation and government of the world; opinions ſo exalted and comprehenſive, as, even by the author's acknowledgment, could never enter into the thoughts of barbarians.

But to proceed in the reviſal: We have here a book, ſays the eſſayiſt, "wrote in "all probability long after the facts it re-"lates." That this book was written long after *ſome* of the facts it relates, is not indeed denied; that it was written long after *all*, or even *moſt* of thoſe facts, I ſee no reaſon to believe. If Mr Hume meant to ſignify, by the expreſſion quoted, that this was in all probability the caſe, why did he not produce the grounds on which the probability is founded? Shall a bold aſſertion paſs for argument? or can it be

expected, that any one ſhould conſider reaſons, which are only in general ſuppos'd, but not ſpecified?

He adds, " corroborated by no *concur-* " *ring* teſtimony;" as little, ſay I, invalidated by any *contradicting* teſtimony; and both, for this plain reaſon, becauſe there is no human compoſition, that can be compar'd with this, in reſpect of antiquity. But tho' this book is not corroborated by the concurrent teſtimony of any coeval hiſtories, becauſe, if there ever were ſuch hiſtories, they are not now extant; it is not therefore deſtitute of all collateral evidence. The following examples of this kind of evidence deſerve ſome notice. The diviſion of time into weeks, which hath obtain'd in many countries, for inſtance among the Egyptians, Chineſe, Indians, and northern Barbarians; nations whereof ſome had little or no intercourſe with others, and were not even known

known by name to the Hebrews *: the tradition which in ſeveral places prevail'd concerning the primitive ſtate of innocence and happineſs: the ſubſequent degeneracy of mankind: their deſtruction by a flood: and the preſervation of one family in a veſſel. Nay, which is ſtill ſtronger, I

* The judicious reader will obſerve, that there is a great difference between the concurrence of nations, in the diviſion of time into *weeks*, and their concurrence in the other periodical diviſions, into *years*, *months*, and *days*. Theſe diviſions ariſe from ſuch natural cauſes, as are every where obvious; the annual and diurnal revolutions of the ſun, and the revolution of the moon. The diviſion into *weeks*, on the contrary, ſeems perfectly arbitrary: conſequently its prevailing in diſtant countries, among nations which had no communication with one another, affords a ſtrong preſumption, that it muſt have been deriv'd from ſome tradition (as that of the creation) which hath been older than the diſperſion of mankind into different regions. 'Tis eaſy to conceive, that the practice, in rude and barbarous ages, might remain, thro' habit, when the tradition, on which it was founded, is entirely loſt; 'tis eaſy to conceive, that afterward, people addicted to idolatry, or who, like the Egyptians, had become proficients in aſtronomy, ſhould aſſign to the different days of the week, the names of their deities, or of the planets.

might

might plead the veſtiges of ſome ſuch cataſtrophe as the deluge, which the ſhells and other marine bodies, that are daily dug out of the bowels of the earth, in places remote from the ſea, do clearly exhibit to us: I might urge the traces, which ſtill remain in ancient hiſtories, of the migration of people and of ſcience from Aſia (which hath not improperly been ſtyled *the cradle of the arts)* into many parts both of Africa and Europe: I might plead the coincidence of thoſe migrations, and of the origin of ſtates and kingdoms, with the time of the diſperſion of the poſterity of Noah.

But to return: The author ſubjoins, " reſembling thoſe fabulous accounts, which " every nation gives of its origin." 'Tis unluckily the fate of holy writ with this author, that both its reſemblance, and its want of reſemblance, to the accounts of other authors, are alike preſumptions againſt

gainſt it. He hath not indeed told us, wherein it reſembles fabulous accounts; and, for my part, tho' the charge were perfectly juſt, I ſhould imagine, little or nothing to the diſadvantage of the Pentateuch, could be deduced from it. It is univerſally agreed among the learned, that even the moſt abſurd fables of idolaters, derive their origin from facts, which having been, in barbarous ages, tranſmitted only by oral tradition, have come at length to be groſsly corrupted and disfigur'd. 'Tis nevertheleſs probable, that ſuch fictions would ſtill retain ſome ſtriking features of thoſe truths, from which they ſprung. And if the books of Moſes reſemble, in any thing, the fabulous accounts of other nations, it would not perhaps be difficult to prove, that they reſemble only whatever is leaſt fabulous in theſe accounts. That this will be found to be the caſe, we may reaſonably preſume,

ſume, even from what hath been obſerv'd already; and if ſo, the reſemblance, ſo far from being an argument againſt thoſe books, is evidently an argument in their favour. In order to remove any doubt that may remain on this head, it ought to be attended to, that, in a number of concurrent teſtimonies, (where there could have been no previous concert) there is a probability independent of that which reſults from our faith in the witneſſes; nay, ſhould the witneſſes be of ſuch a character as to merit no faith at all. This probability ariſeth from the *concurrence* itſelf. That ſuch a concurrence ſhould ſpring from *chance*, is as one to infinite, in other words, morally impoſſible; if therefore concert be excluded, there remains no other cauſe but the reality of the fact.

'Tis true, that " upon reading this book, " we find it full of prodigies and mi-

" racles:"

" racles:" but 'tis alſo true, that many of thoſe miracles are ſuch, as the ſubject it treats of, muſt unavoidably make us expect. For a proof of this poſition, I need but refer the reader to the principles eſtabliſh'd in the preceding ſection. No book in the world do we find written in a more ſimple ſtyle; nowhere does there appear in it, the leaſt affectation of ornament; yet nowhere elſe is the Almighty repreſented, as either acting or ſpeaking in a manner ſo becoming the eternal ruler of the world. Compare the account of the CREATION which is given by *Moſes*, with the ravings of Sanchuniathon the *Phenician* philoſopher, which he hath dignified with the title of COSMOGONY; or compare it with the childiſh extravagancies of the *Greek* and *Latin* poets, ſo juſtly likened by the author to *a ſick man's dreams* *; and then ſay, whether any perſon of candour and diſ-

* Natural hiſtory of religion. XV.

cernment will not be diſpos'd to exclaim in the words of the prophet, *What is the* CHAFF *to the* WHEAT *! The account is what we ſhould call, in reference to our experience, *miraculous*. But was it poſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe? I believe the greateſt infidel will not deny, that it is at leaſt as plauſible an opinion, that the world had a beginning, as that it had not. If it had, can it be imagin'd by any man in his ſenſes, that that particular quality ſhould be an objection to the narrative, which he previouſly knows it muſt have? Muſt not the firſt production of things, the original formation of animals and vegetables, require exertions of power, which, in preſervation and propagation, can never be exemplified?

It will perhaps be objected, That if the miracles continued no longer, and extended no further, than the neceſſity of creation

* Jer. xxiii. 28.

requir'd,

requir'd, this reaſoning would be juſt; but that in fact they both continued much longer, and extended much further. The anſwer is obvious: It is impoſſible for us to judge, how far the neceſſity of the caſe required. Immediately after the creation, things muſt have been in a ſtate very different from that which they are in at preſent. How long that ſtate might continue, we have not the means of diſcovering: but as, in human infancy, 'tis neceſſary that the feeble creature ſhould, for ſome time, be carried in the nurſe's arms, and afterward, by the help of leading-ſtrings, be kept from falling, before he acquire ſtrength to walk; 'tis not unlikely, that, in the infancy of the world, ſuch interpoſitions ſhould be more frequent and requiſite, till nature attaining a certain maturity, thoſe laws and that conſtitution ſhould be eſtabliſhed, which we now experience. It will greatly ſtrengthen this concluſion,

to reflect, that in every ſpecies of natural productions, with which we are acquainted, we invariably obſerve a ſimilar feebleneſs in the individuals on their firſt appearance, and a ſimilar gradation towards a ſtate of greater perfection and ſtability. Beſides, if we acknowledge the neceſſity of the exertion of a power, which only in reference to our experience is call'd miraculous; the queſtion, as is well obſerv'd by the judicious prelate formerly quoted *, "whether this power ſtopped immediate-"ly, after it had made man, or went on "and exerted itſelf farther, is a queſtion "of the ſame kind, as whether an ordi-"nary power exerted itſelf in ſuch a par-"ticular degree and manner, or not." It cannot therefore, if we think reaſonably on this ſubject, greatly aſtoniſh us, that ſuch a book ſhould give "an account of a "ſtate of the world, and of human na-

* Analogy of religion, &c. part 2. chap. 2. ſect. 2.

"ture,

" ture, entirely different from the preſent;
" of our fall from that ſtate; of the age
" of man extended to near a thouſand
" years; and of the deſtruction of the
" world by a deluge."

Finally, if, in ſuch a book, mingled with the excellencies I have remarked, there ſhould appear ſome difficulties, ſome things for which we are not able to account; for inſtance, " the arbitrary choice
" of one people, as the favourites of Hea-
" ven; and their deliverance from bon-
" dage by prodigies the moſt aſtoniſhing
" imaginable;" is there any thing more extraordinary here, than, in a compoſition of this nature, we might have previouſly expected to have found? We muſt be immoderately conceited of our own underſtandings, if we imagine otherwiſe. Thoſe favourites of Heaven, it muſt be likewiſe own'd, are the countrymen of the writer; but of ſuch a writer, as of all hiſtorians

or

or annaliſts, ancient or modern, ſhows the leaſt diſpoſition to flatter his countrymen. Where, I pray, do we find him, either celebrating their virtues, or palliating their vices; either extolling their genius, or magnifying their exploits? Add to all theſe, that, in every thing which is not expreſsly aſcrib'd to the interpoſal of Heaven, the relation is in itſelf plauſible, the incidents are natural, the characters and manners ſuch as are admirably adapted to thoſe early ages of the world. In theſe particulars, there is no affectation of the marvellous; there are no "deſcriptions of "ſea and land monſters; no relations of "wonderful adventures, ſtrange men, and "uncouth manners *."

WHEN all theſe things are ſeriouſly attended to, I perſuade myſelf, that no unprejudiced perſon will think, that the

* p. 185.

Pentateuch

Pentateuch bears falſehood on the face of it, and deſerves to be rejected without examination. On the contrary, every unprejudiced perſon will find (I ſay not, that its falſehood would be more miraculous, than all the miracles it relates; this is a language which I do not underſtand, and which only ſerves to darken a plain queſtion; but I ſay, he will find) very many and very ſtrong indications of authenticity and truth; and will conclude, that all the evidences, both intrinſic and extrinſic, by which it is ſupported, ought to be impartially canvaſſed. Abundant evidences there are of both kinds; ſome hints of them have been given in this ſection; but to conſider them fully, falls not within the limits of my preſent purpoſe.

CON-

CONCLUSION.

WHAT is the ſum of all that hath been now diſcuſſed? It is briefly this: *That the author's favourite argument, of which he boaſts the diſcovery, is founded in error* *, *is managed with ſophiſtry* †, *and is at laſt abandon'd by its inventor* ‡, *as fit only for ſhow, not for uſe; that he is not more ſucceſsful in the collateral arguments he employs; particularly, that there is no peculiar preſumption againſt religious miracles* ‖; *that, on the contrary, there is a peculiar preſumption in their favour* **; *that the general maxim, whereby he would enable us to decide betwixt oppoſite miracles, when it is ſtript of the pompous diction, that ſerves it at once for decoration, and for diſguiſe, is diſcover'd to be no other than an identical*

* Part 1. ſect. 1. † ſect. 2. ‡ ſect. 3.
‖ ſect. 4. ** ſect. 5.

propoſition,

propoſition, which, as it conveys no knowledge, can be of no ſervice to the cauſe of truth * ; *that there is no preſumption, ariſing either from human nature* †, *or from the hiſtory of mankind* ‡, *againſt the miracles ſaid to have been wrought in proof of Chriſtianity; that the evidence of theſe is not ſubverted by thoſe miracles, which hiſtorians of other religions have recorded* ‖ ; *that neither the Pagan* **, *nor the Popiſh* †† *miracles, on which he hath expatiated, will bear to be compar'd with thoſe of holy writ; that, abſtracting from the evidence for particular facts, we have irrefragable evidence, that there have been miracles in former times* ‡‡ ; *and, laſtly, that his examination of the Pentateuch is both partial and imperfect, and conſequently ſtands in need of a reviſal* ‖‖.

" OUR moſt holy religion," ſays the

* Part 1. ſect. 6. † Part 2. ſect. 1. ‡ ſect. 2. ‖ ſect 3.
** ſect. 4. †† ſect 5. ‡‡ ſect. 6. ‖‖ ſect. 7.

author in the concluſion of his eſſay, " is " founded on faith, not on reaſon; and " 'tis a ſure method of expoſing it, to put " it to ſuch a trial, as it is by no means " fitted to endure." If, by *our moſt holy religion*, we are to underſtand the fundamental articles of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, theſe have their foundation in the nature and decrees of God; and, as they are antecedent to our faith or reaſonings, they muſt be alſo independent of both. If they are true, our diſbelief can never make them falſe; if they are falſe, the belief of all the world will never make them true. But as the only queſtion between Mr Hume and the defenders of the goſpel, is, Whether there is reaſon to believe thoſe articles? he can only mean by *our moſt holy religion*, our belief of the Chriſtian doctrine: and concerning this belief we are told, that it is founded on *faith*, not on reaſon; that is, our faith is founded on our faith; in other

other words, it hath no foundation, it is a mere chimera, the creature of a diſtemper'd brain. I ſay not, on the contrary, that *our moſt holy religion* is founded on *reaſon*, becauſe this expreſſion, in my opinion, is both ambiguous and inaccurate; but I ſay, that we have ſufficient reaſon for the belief of our religion; or, to expreſs myſelf in the words of an apoſtle, that the Chriſtian, if it is not his own fault, may *be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh* him *a* REASON *of* his *hope*.

So far therefore am I from being afraid of expoſing Chriſtianity, by ſubmitting it to the teſt of reaſon; ſo far am I from judging this a trial, which it is by no means fitted to endure, that I think, on the contrary, the moſt vehement attacks that have been made upon the faith of Jeſus, have been of ſervice to it. Yes: I do not heſitate to affirm, that our religion

hath been indebted to the attempts, tho' not to the intentions, of its bittereſt enemies. They have tried its ſtrength indeed, and, by trying, they have diſplay'd its ſtrength; and that in ſo clear a light, as we could never have hop'd, without ſuch a trial, to have view'd it in. Let them therefore write, let them argue, and, when arguments fail, even let them cavil, againſt religion, as much as they pleaſe: I ſhould be heartily ſorry, that ever in this iſland, the aſylum of liberty, where the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is better underſtood (however defective its inhabitants are in the obſervance of the precepts) than in any other part of the Chriſtian world; I ſhould, I ſay, be ſorry, that ever, in this iſland, ſo great a diſſervice were done to true religion, as to check its adverſaries, in any other way, than by anſwering candidly their objections. I muſt at the ſame time acknowledge, that I am both aſham'd

aſham'd and griev'd, when I obſerve any friends of religion, betray ſo great a diffidence in the goodneſs of their cauſe (for to this diffidence it can only be imputed) as to ſhow an inclination for recurring to more violent methods. The aſſaults of infidels, I may venture to propheſy, will never overturn our religion. They will prove not more hurtful to the Chriſtian ſyſtem, if 'tis allowed *to compare ſmall things with greateſt*, than the boiſterous winds commonly prove to the ſturdy oak. They ſhake it impetuouſly for a while, and loudly threaten its ſubverſion; whilſt, in effect, they only ſerve to make it ſtrike its roots the deeper, and ſtand the firmer ever after.

ONE word more with the eſſayiſt, and I have done. " Upon the whole," ſays he, " we may conclude, that the *Chriſtian* " *religion*, not only was at firſt attended

" with

" with miracles, but even, at this day, " cannot be believ'd by any reaſonable " perſon without one. Mere reaſon is in- " ſufficient to convince us of its veracity; " and whoever is moved by faith to aſſent " to it;" that is, whoever by believing is induced to believe it, " is conſcious of a " continued miracle in his own perſon, " which ſubverts all the principles of his " underſtanding, and gives him a deter- " mination to believe, what is moſt con- " trary to cuſtom and experience." An author is never ſo ſure of writing unan- ſwerably, as when he writes altogether unintelligibly. 'Tis impoſſible that you ſhould fight your enemy before you find him; and if he hath ſcreen'd himſelf in darkneſs, 'tis next to impoſſible that you ſhould find him. Indeed, if any mean- ing can be gather'd from that ſtrange aſ- ſemblage of words juſt now quoted, it ſeems to be one or other of theſe which follow:

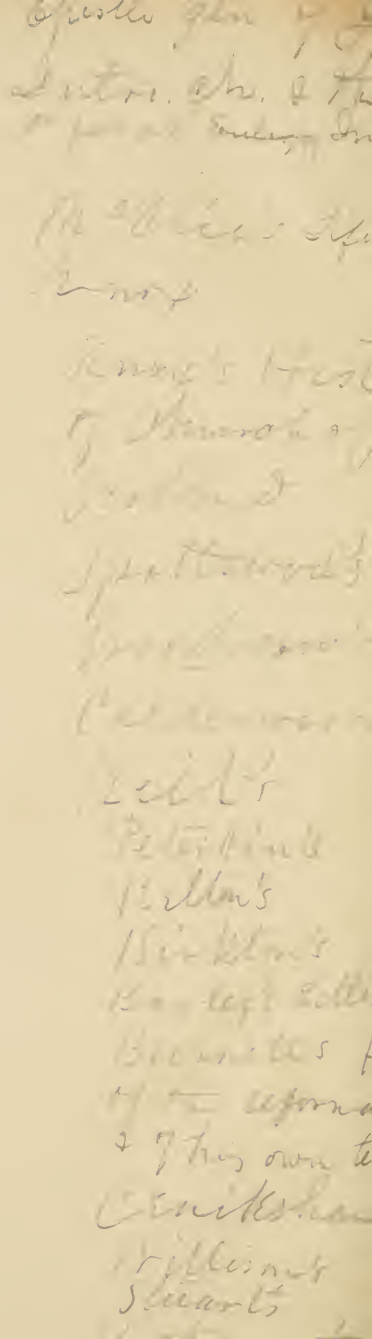
follow: *either*, That there are not any in the world, who believe the goſpel; *or*, That there is no want of miracles in our own time. How either of theſe remarks, if juſt, can contribute to the author's purpoſe, it will not, I ſuſpect, be eaſy to diſcover. If the ſecond remark is true, if there is no want of miracles at preſent, ſurely experience cannot be pleaded againſt the belief of miracles ſaid to have been perform'd in time paſt. Again, if the firſt remark is true, if there are not any in the world who believe the goſpel, becauſe, as Mr Hume ſuppoſeth, a miracle cannot be believed without a new miracle, why all this ado to refute opinions which nobody entertains? Certainly, to uſe his own words, "The knights-er-" rant, who wander'd about to clear the " world of dragons and giants, never en-" tertain'd the leaſt doubt concerning the " exiſtence of theſe monſters *."

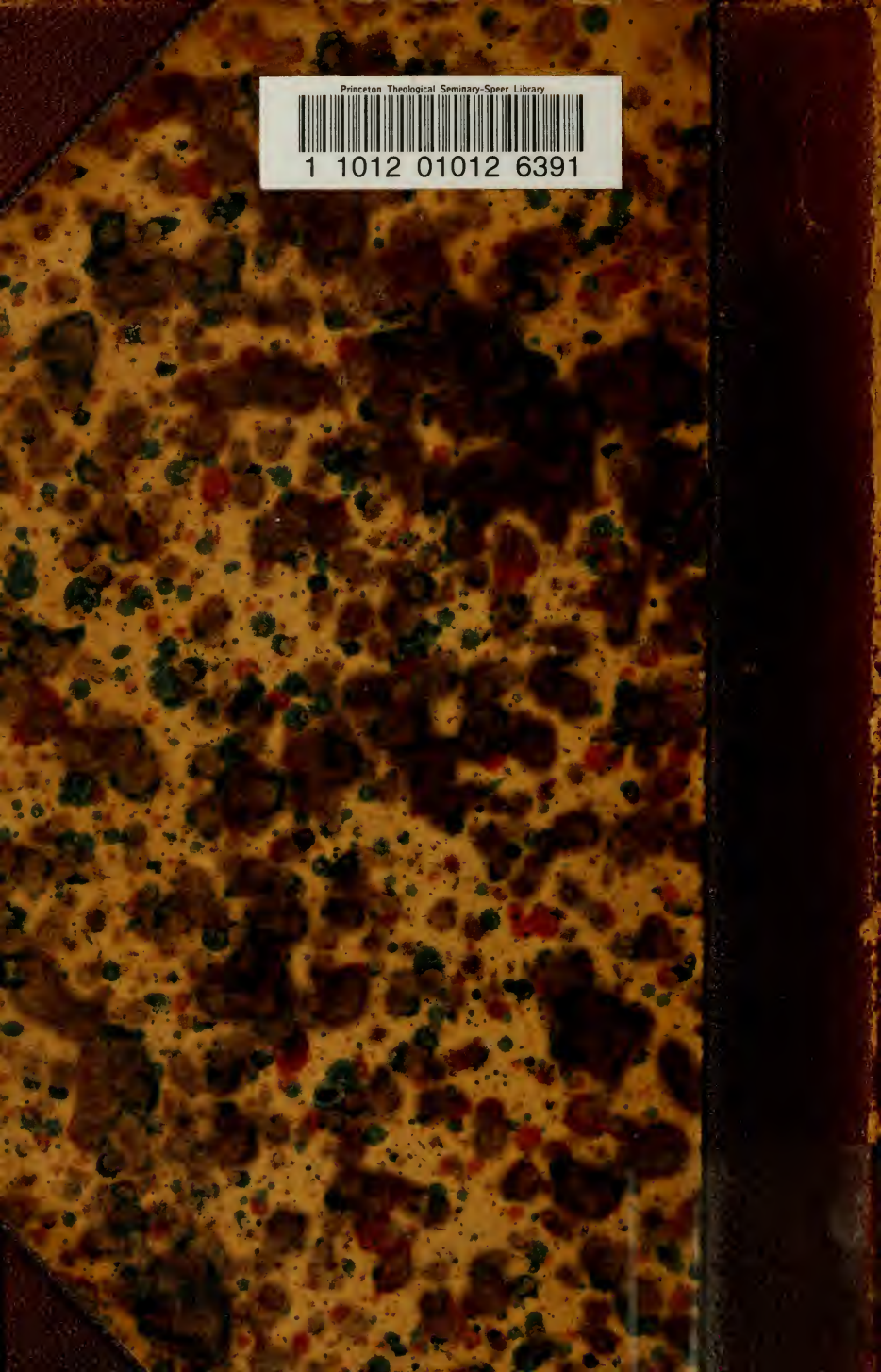
* See the firſt paragraph of Eſſay 12. Of the academical or ſceptical philoſophy.

Might

Might I presume faintly to copy but the manner of so inimitable an original, as the author hath exhibited in his concluding words, I should also conclude upon the whole, That miracles are capable of proof from testimony, and that there is a full proof of this kind, for those said to have been wrought in support of Christianity; that whoever is moved, by Mr Hume's ingenious argument, to assert, that no testimony can give sufficient evidence of miracles, admits, tho' perhaps unconscious, in place of *reason*, a mere *subtilty*, which subverts the evidence of testimony, of history, and even of experience itself, giving him a determination to deny, what the common sense of mankind, founded in the primary principles of the understanding, would lead him to believe.

THE END.

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